اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا ۙ

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi
Surah An-Nisa (The Women)

سُوْرَةُ النِّسَآءِ مَدَنِيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوْا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ وَّخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيْرًا وَّنِسَآءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْ تَسَآءَلُوْنَ بِهٖ وَالْاَرْحَامَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيْبًا ۝١

(4-1) O men! Fear your Lord Who created you from a single being and out of it created its mate; and out of the two spread many men and women. (1) Fear Allah in Whose name you plead for rights, and heed the ties of kinship. Surely, Allah is ever watchful over you.

(1) What are the mutual rights of human beings, what are the principles on which a sound and stable family life can be established, are questions that are discussed a little further on in this surah. As an appropriate introduction to the subject, the surah opens by exhorting the believers to fear God and to avoid courting His displeasure, and by urging them to recognize that all human beings have sprung from the same root and that all of them are, therefore, of one another's flesh and blood. The expression 'Who created you from a single being (nafs)' indicates that the creation of the human species began with the creation of one individual. At another place, the Qur'an specifies that the one person from whom the human race spread in the world was Adam. (For Adam being the progenitor of mankind see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, (Surah 2, verses 31 f.) and (Surah al-Araf: 11), etc. - Ed.)

The details how out of that 'being' its mate was created are not known to us. The explanation which is generally given by the commentators of the Qur'an and which is also found in the Bible is that Eve was, created out of a rib of Adam. (The Talmud is even more detailed in that it states that Eve was created out of Adam's thirteenth rib on the left side.) The Qur'an, however, is silent on the matter and the tradition which is adduced in support

of this statement does not mean what it is often thought to be. It is thus better that we leave the matter in the same state of ambiguity in which it was left by God, rather than waste our time trying to determine, in detail, the actual process of the creation of man's mate.

'The author alludes to, but does not quote, the text of the following tradition:

Muslim, 'Rida'ah', 61 and 62; Tirmidhi, 'Talaq'' 12; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, pp. 428, 449, 497, 530 and vol. 6, p. 279 - Ed.

وَاٰتُوا الْيَتٰمٰٓى اَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَتَبَدَّلُوا الْخَبِيْثَ بِالطَّيِّبِ وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَهُمْ اِلٰٓى اَمْوَالِكُمْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ حُوْبًا كَبِيْرًا ۲

(4-2) Give orphans their property [2] and do not exchange the bad for the good, [3] and do not eat up their property by mixing it with your own. This surely is a mighty sin.

(2) God directs the guardians of the orphans to spend out of the latter's property while they are still minors, and to restore it to them when they attain majority.

(3) The order not to exchange the bad for the good has several meanings. On the one hand, it means that one should not replace honest by dishonest living. At the same time, it also means that one should not exchange one's own property which is of little value for the more valuable property of the orphans.

وَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تُقْسِطُوْا فِي الْيَتٰمٰى فَانْكِحُوْا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَاۗءِ مَثْنٰى وَثُلٰثَ وَرُبٰعَ ۚ فَاِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا فَوَاحِدَةً اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ۭ ذٰلِكَ اَدْنٰٓى اَلَّا تَعُوْلُوْا ۳

(4-3) If you fear that you might not treat the orphans justly, then marry the women that seem good to you: two, or three, or four. (4) If you fear that you will not be able to treat them justly, then marry (only) one, (5) or marry from among those whom your right hands possess. (6) This will make it more likely that you will avoid injustice.

(4) Commentators have explained this in the following ways:

(i) There is the view of 'A'isha who says that men tended to marry orphan girls who were under their guardianship out of consideration for either their property, beauty or because they thought they would be able to treat them according to their whims, as they had no one to protect them. After marriage such men sometimes committed excesses against these girls. It is in this context that the Muslims are told that if they fear they will not be able to do justice to the orphan girls, then they should marry other girls whom they like. (This interpretation seems to be supported by (Verse 127) of this surah.)

(ii) The second view is that of Ibn 'Abbas and his disciple 'Ikrimah who expressed the opinion that in the Jahiliyah period there was no limit on the number of wives a man could take. The result was that a man sometimes married as many as ten women and, when expenses increased because of a large family, he encroached on the rights either of his orphan nephews or other relatives. It was in this context that God fixed the limit of four wives and instructed the Muslims that they may marry up to four wives providing they possessed the capacity to treat them equitably.

(iii) Sa'id b. Jubayr, Qatadah and some other commentators say that while the Arabs of the Jahiliyah period did not approve of subjecting orphans to wrong, they had no concept of justice and equity with regard to women. They married as many women as they wanted and then

subjected them to injustice and oppression. It is in this context that people are told that if they fear perpetrating wrongs on orphans they ought to be equally worried about perpetrating them on women. In the first place they should never marry more than four, and of those four, they should marry only as many as they can treat fairly.

Each of the three interpretations is plausible and all three may possibly be correct. Moreover, the verse could also mean that if a person does not find himself able to treat orphans in a fair manner, then he might as well marry the women who are looking after those orphans.

(5) Muslim jurists are agreed that according to this verse the maximum number Of wives has been fixed at four. This conclusion is also supported by traditions. It is reported that when Ghaylan, the chief of Ta'if, embraced Islam he had nine wives. The Prophet (peace be on him) ordered him to keep only four wives and divorce the rest. Another person, Nawfal b. Mu'awiyah, had five wives. The Prophet (peace be on him) ordered him to divorce one of them. (For the relevant traditions see the comments of Ibn Kathir and Qurtubi on this verse - Ed.)

This verse stipulates that marrying more wives than one is permissible on the condition that one treats his wives equitably. A person who avails himself of this permission granted by God to have a plurality of wives, and disregards the condition laid down by God to treat them equitably has not acted in good faith with God. In case there are complaints from wives that they are not being treated equitably, the Islamic state has the right to intervene and redress such grievances.

Some people who have been overwhelmed and overawed by the Christianized outlook of Westerners have tried to prove that the real aim of the Qur'an was to put an end to polygamy (which, in their opinion, is intrinsically evil). Since it was widely practised at that time, however, Islam confined itself to placing restrictions on it. Such arguments only show the mental slavery to

which these people have succumbed. That polygamy is an evil per se is an unacceptable proposition, for under certain conditions it becomes a moral and social necessity. If polygamy is totally prohibited men who cannot remain satisfied with only one wife will look outside the bounds of matrimonial life and create sexual anarchy and corruption. This is likely to cause much greater harm than polygamy to the moral and social order. For this reason the Qur'an has allowed those who feel the need for it to resort to polygamy. Those who consider it an evil in itself may certainly denounce it in disregard of the Qur'an and may even argue for its abolition. But they have no right to attribute such a view to the Qur'an, for it has expressed its permission of polygamy in quite categorical terms. Indeed, there is not the slightest hint in the Qur'an that could justify the conclusion that it advocates abolition of polygamy. (For further elaboration see my book, Sunnat k A'iniHaythiyat, Lahore, 3rd edition, 1975, pp. 307-16.)

(6) This expression denotes 'slave-girls', i.e. female captives of war who are distributed by the state among individuals. The purpose of this verse is to tell men that if their financial circumstances do not permit them to support a free woman as their wife then they may marry a slave-girl (see verse 25 below); if they consider it necessary to have more than one wife and it would be difficult for them to treat their free wives equitably they may resort to slave-girls, for here the burden of obligations is lighter by comparison. (For further injunctions regarding slave-girls seen. 44 below.)

وَاٰتُوا النِّسَآءَ صَدُقٰتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ؕ فَاِ طِبْنَ لَكُمْ عَ شَیْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوْهُ هَنِیْٓـًٔا مَّرِیْٓـًٔا ۝۴

(4-4) Give women their bridal-due in good cheer (considering it a duty); but if they willingly remit any part of it, consume it with good pleasure. (7)

(7) In the opinion of 'Umar and Shurayh, if a woman gives up either the whole or a part of the bridal-due (mahr) in favor of her husband and later reclaims it from him then he is bound to pay it.

The claim on the woman's part would be tantamount to her unwillingness to remit either the whole or a part of the bridal-due. For further details see the section entitled 'Mahr' in my book Huquq al-Zawjayn, 16th edition, Lahore, 1976, pp. 31-3 and 119-23.

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَآءَ اَمْوٰلَكُمُ الَّتِيْ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ قِيٰمًا وَّارْزُقُوْهُمْ فِيْهَا وَاكْسُوْهُمْ وَقُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ۝٥

(4-5) Do not entrust your properties - which Allah has made a means of support for you - to the weak of understanding, but maintain and clothe them out of it, and say to them a kind word of admonition. (8)

(8) This verse covers a very wide spectrum of meaning. It emphasizes to the community of believers that wealth is one of the main supports of human life. It should not be left, therefore, at the mercy of those who are incompetent to handle it properly. By misusing wealth such people might destroy the bases of social and economic life and wreck the moral foundations of human society. The right to private property is not so absolute; if a person is incapable of exercising this right properly and if he might cause grave social harm by wanton expenditure then his right may be forfeited. The necessities of such a person's life should always be provided for. But so far as the exercise of his proprietary rights is concerned, due restrictions should be placed on it in order that the owner is restrained from spending his resources in brazen disregard of the dictates of morality, collective welfare and economic interests of the community. According to the directive embodied in the verse, anyone who entrusts his property to someone else's care should satisfy himself that the latter is capable of making good use of it. At a higher level, it is incumbent upon an Islamic state to take over the management of the properties of those who either lack totally the capacity for good management or cause social damage by misuse. In such cases the state is responsible for providing these people with their livelihood.

وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتٰمٰى حَتّٰٓى اِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ ۚ فَاِنْ اٰنَسْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْهَآ اِسْرَافًا وَّبِدَارًا اَنْ يَّكْبَرُوْا ۭ وَمَنْ كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ ۚ وَمَنْ كَانَ فَقِيْرًا فَلْيَاْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۭ فَاِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ اِلَيْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ فَاَشْهِدُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ ۭ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ حَسِيْبًا ۝

(4-6) Test the orphans until they reach the age of marriage, [9] and then if you find them mature of mind hand over to them their property, [10] and do not eat it up by either spending extravagantly or in haste, fearing that they would grow up (and claim it). If the guardian of the orphan is rich let him abstain entirely (from his ward's property); and if he is poor, let him partake of it in a fair measure. [11] When you hand over their property to them let there be witnesses on their behalf. Allah is sufficient to take account (of your deeds).

(9) When such people approach their majority their mental development should be watched so as to determine to what extent they have become capable of managing their own affairs.

(10) Two conditions have been laid down for handing over the charge of their properties to such people. The first of these is the attainment of puberty, and the second is that of mental maturity - i.e. the capacity to manage their affairs in a sound and appropriate manner. There is full agreement among Muslim jurists with regard to the first condition. As for the second condition, Abu Hanifah is of the opinion that if an orphan does not attain mental maturity after he has attained puberty, the guardian of the orphan should wait for a maximum of seven years after which he should hand over the property to its owner regardless of whether he has attained maturity or not. According to Abu Yusuf, Muhammad b. al-Hasan and Shafi'i, maturity is an indispensable pre-condition for the handing over of property. If one were to apply the doctrine of the latter jurists it would probably be more appropriate to refer particular cases to a judge under Islamic law. If the judge is convinced that the person concerned lacks maturity he should make adequate arrangements for the supervision of

that person's financial affairs. (For a more complete study of the subject see Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 59 ff.; Ibn Rushd, Biddyat al-Mujtahid, 2 vols., Cairo, Al-Maktabahal-Tijariyahal-Kubra, n.d., vol. 2, pp. 275ff.-Ed.)

(11) The guardian is entitled to remuneration for his service. The amount of this remuneration should be such as is deemed to be fair by neutral and reasonable people. Moreover, the guardian is instructed that he should take a fixed and known amount by way of remuneration, that he should take it openly rather than secretly, and that he should keep an account of it.

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوٰلِدَانِ وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ ۠ وَلِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوٰلِدَانِ
وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ اَوْ كَثُرَ ۭ نَصِيْبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا ۝

(4-7) Just as there is a share for men in what their parents and kinsfolk leave behind, so there is a share for women in what their parents and kinsfolk leave behind - be it little or much (12) - a share ordained (by Allah).

(12) This verse embodies five legal injunctions. First, that women as well as men are entitled to inheritance. Second, that inheritance, however meagre it might be, should be distributed; even if the deceased has left a small piece of cloth and he has ten heirs, that piece of cloth should be distributed among them all. This does not exclude, however, the permissibility of one heir purchasing the shares of other heirs with their consent. Third, this verse indicates that the law of inheritance is applicable to all kinds of property - movable and immovable, agricultural, industrial and so on. Fourth, it shows that the right of inheritance comes into force as soon as a person dies leaving property. Fifth, it implies the rule that immediate blood-relatives exclude those that are further removed.

وَ اِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ اُولُوا الْقُرْبٰى وَ الْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنُ فَارْزُقُوْهُم مِّنْهُ وَقُوْلُوْا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوْفًا ۝٨

(4-8) If other near of kin orphans and needy are pre sent at the time of division of inheritance give them some thing of it and speak to them kindly. (13)

(13) This directive is addressed to the heirs of the deceased. They are told not to be niggardly towards their relatives whether they be close or distant. Nor should they be niggardly towards either poor and needy members of the family or towards orphans who are present when the inheritance is distributed. Although they are not legally entitled to any share it is seemly for people to act magnanimously and give them something out of their inheritance, and especially to desist from making hurtful remarks.

وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِيْنَ لَوْ تَرَكُوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعٰفًا خَافُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلْيَقُوْلُوْا قَوْلًا سَدِيْدًا ۝٩

(4-9) And let them fear, those who, if they would themselves leave behind helpless offspring, they would surely have been fearful on their account. Let them, then, fear Allah and make the right statement.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَاْكُلُوْنَ اَمْوَالَ الْيَتٰمٰى ظُلْمًا اِنَّمَا يَاْكُلُوْنَ فِيْ بُطُوْنِهِمْ نَارًا ؕ وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيْرًا ۝١٠

(4-10) Behold, those who wrongfully devour the properties of orphans only fill their bellies with fire. Soon they will burn in the Blazing Flame. (14)

(14) It is reported in a tradition that after the Battle of Uhud the wife of Sa'd b. Rabi' brought her two daughters to the Prophet (peace be on him) and said: 'O Messenger of God! These are daughters of Sa'd who was with you in the Battle of Uhud, where

he was martyred. The girls' uncles have seized the whole property and left nothing for them. Who will now marry these girls?' It was after this incident that these verses were revealed. (See Muhammad 'Ali al-Sabuni's comments on this verse in his Safwat al-Tafasir and the sources quoted therein - Ed.)

يُوْصِيْكُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْٓ اَوْلَادِكُمْ ۗ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ۚ فَاِنْ كُنَّ نِسَآءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ ۗ وَلِاَبَوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ اِنْ كَانَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَاِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّوَرِثَهٗٓ اَبَوَاهُ فَلِاُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَهٗٓ اِخْوَةٌ فَلِاُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصِيْ بِهَآ اَوْ دَيْنٍ ۗ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ وَاَبْنَآؤُكُمْ لَا تَدْرُوْنَ اَيُّهُمْ اَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفْعًا ۗ فَرِيْضَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١١﴾

(4-11) Allah thus commands you concerning your children: the share of the male is like that of two females. (15) If (the heirs of the deceased are) more than two daughters, they shall have two-thirds of the inheritance; (16) and if there is only one daughter, then she shall have half the inheritance. If the deceased has any offspring, each of his parents shall have a sixth of the inheritance; (17) and if the deceased has no child and his parents alone inherit him, then one-third shall go to his mother; (18) and if the deceased has brothers and sisters, then one-sixth shall go to his mother. (19) All these shares are to be given after payment of the bequest he might have made or any debts outstanding against him. (20)

You do not know which of them, your parents or your children, are more beneficial to you.

But these portions have been determined by Allah, for He indeed knows all, is cognizant of all beneficent considerations. (21)

(15) This is the first general rule in connection with inheritance, viz., that the share of the male should be double that of the female. Since Islamic law imposes greater financial obligations on men in respect of family life and relieves women of a number of

such obligations, justice demands that a woman's share in inheritance should be less than that of a man.

(16) The same applies in the case where there are two daughters. If the deceased leaves only daughters, and if there are two or more daughters then they will receive two-thirds of the inheritance and the remaining one-third will go to the other heirs. But if the deceased has only one son there is a consensus among jurists that in the absence of other heirs he is entitled to all the property and if the deceased has other heirs, he is entitled to the property left after their shares have been distributed.

(17) If the deceased leaves issue each of his parents will receive one-sixth of the inheritance irrespective of whether the issue consists either only of daughters, only of sons, of both sons and daughters, of just one son or just one daughter. The remaining two-thirds will be distributed among the rest of the heirs.

(18) If there are no other heirs than the parents, the remaining two-thirds will go to the share of the father; otherwise the two-thirds will be distributed between the father and other heirs.

(19) In the case where the deceased also has brothers and sisters the share of the mother will be one-sixth rather than one-third. In this case the sixth that was deducted from the share of the mother will be added to that of the father, for in this circumstance the father's obligations are heavier. It should be noted that if the parents of the deceased are alive, the brothers and sisters will not be entitled to any share in the inheritance.

(20) The mention of bequest precedes the mention of debt, for although not everyone need be encumbered with debt it is necessary that everyone should make a bequest. (However, other Mufassirun (exegetes) regard making a bequest as a discretionary act - Ed.) As for legalities, there is consensus among Muslims that the payment of debts takes precedence over the payment of bequests, i.e. if the deceased owes a debt and also leaves a bequest, the debt will first be paid out of the inheritance, and only then will his bequest be fulfilled.

We have already stated in connection with bequest (see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, n. 182) that a man has the right to bequeath up to a maximum of one-third of his inheritance. The principle laid down in regard to bequest is that a man can allocate a portion of his inheritance either to a relative who is not legally entitled to any prescribed share in the inheritance or to others whom he considers deserving of help, e.g. either an orphaned grandson or grand-daughter, the widow of a son in financial distress, any brother, sister, brother's wife, nephew, and other relatives who seem to be in need of support. If there are no such relatives bequests can be made either to other needy people or for charitable purposes. In short, the Law has fixed regulations for the distribution of two-thirds or more of one's inheritance, out of which the legal heirs are to receive their shares according to the regulations laid down by the Law. A maximum of one-third of the inheritance has been left to the discretion of the person concerned, who can dispose of it by means of bequest in light of his particular family circumstances. If anyone makes either an inequitable bequest or misuses his discretion so as to hurt the legitimate rights of others, it is permissible for the members of the family to rectify the situation either by mutual agreement or by requesting a judge to intervene. For further details see my booklet Yatim Pot ki Wirathat ka Mas'alah, Lahore, 1954.

(21) This is in response to those feeble-minded people who do not fully appreciate God's law of inheritance and try to fill, with the help of their limited intellect, what they see as gaps in God's Laws.

وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ اَزْوٰجُكُمْ اِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهُنَّ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمُ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا
تَرَكْنَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصِيْنَ بِهَآ اَوْ دَيْنٍ ۗ وَلَهُنَّ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُمْ اِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّكُمْ وَلَدٌ ۚ فَاِنْ
كَانَ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ الثُّمُنُ مِمَّا تَرَكْتُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوْصُوْنَ بِهَآ اَوْ دَيْنٍ ۗ وَاِنْ كَانَ رَجُلٌ
يُّوْرَثُ كَلٰلَةً اَوِ امْرَاَةٌ وَّلَهٗۤ اَخٌ اَوْ اُخْتٌ فَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانُوْۤا اَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ
فَهُمْ شُرَكَآءُ فِى الثُّلُثِ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُّوْصٰى بِهَآ اَوْ دَيْنٍ ۙ غَيْرَ مُضَآرٍّ ۚ وَصِيَّةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ
عَلِيْمٌ حَلِيْمٌ ۝١٢

(4-12) And to you belongs half of whatever has been left behind by your wives if they die childless; but if they have any children then to you belongs a fourth of what they have left behind, after payment of the bequest they might have made or any debts outstanding against them. And to them belongs a fourth of what you leave behind, if you die childless; and if you have any child then to them belongs one-eighth of what you have left behind, [22] after the payment of the bequest you might have made or any debts outstanding against you. And if the man or woman has no heir in the direct line, but has a brother or sister, then each of these shall inherit one-sixth; but if they are more than two, then they shall inherit one-third of the inheritance, [23] after the payment of the bequest that might have been made or any debts outstanding against the deceased, providing that the bequest causes no injury. [24] This is a commandment from Allah; Allah is All-Knowing, All-Forbearing. [25]

(22) Whether a man has one wife or several wives the share of the wife/wives is one-eighth of the inheritance when the deceased has issue, and one-fourth when he has no issue. The share of the wives, whether one-fourth or one-eighth, will be distributed equally among them.

(23) The remaining five-sixths or two-thirds of the inheritance goes to the legal heirs, if any. Where there are no legal heirs, the person concerned is entitled to make a bequest with regard to the remaining part of the inheritance. Commentators are agreed that the sisters and brothers mentioned here mean half-brothers and half-sisters, i.e. those who have kinship with the deceased on the mother's side. Injunctions affecting full brothers and sisters, and half-brothers and half-sisters on the father's side are mentioned towards the end of the present surah. See (verse 176 below, and nn. 219 ff. - Ed.)

(24) 'Bequests which cause injury' are those that entail depriving deserving kin of their legitimate rights. Similarly, the debt which causes injury is the fake debt which one falsely admits to owing, and any other device to which one resorts merely in order to deprive the rightful heirs of their shares in inheritance. This kind of injury has been declared to be a major sin in a tradition from the Prophet (peace be on him). According to another tradition the Prophet (peace be on him) said that even if a man worked all his life, like the men of Paradise, yet ended his life's record by making a wrongful bequest, he would be consigned to Hell. (Ibn Kathir, vol. 2, p. 218.) Such an act of deliberate injury and calculated effort designed to deprive people of their due rights is always a sin, but it is mentioned by God particularly in the case of kalalah (the person who leaves behind neither parents nor descendants). (For kalalah see nn. 219 ff. below - Ed.) The reason for this seems to be that a man who has neither issue nor parents is often prone to squander his property and somehow prevent his distant relatives from receiving any share in the inheritance.

(25) God's knowledge is referred to here for two reasons. First, to stress that if a man violates God's Law he will not be able to escape from the grip of God, for He is Omniscient. Second, to emphasize that the shares in inheritance fixed by God are absolutely sound, for God knows better than His creatures where their true interests lie. Reference is also made to God's forbearance. This is in order to point out that harshness could not characterize the laws laid down by God in respect of inheritance since He Himself is not harsh. On the contrary, the aim of God's laws is to prevent people suffering inconvenience and hardship.

(25a) This is a terrifying verse in which those who either tamper with God's laws of inheritance or violate the legal bounds categorically laid down by God in His Book are warned of unending punishment. It is lamentable that, in spite of these very stern warnings, Muslims have occasionally been guilty of

breaching God's laws with the same boldness and insolence as that of the Jews. Disobedience to God's law of inheritance has occasionally assumed the proportion of open rebellion against Him. In some instances, women have been disinherited altogether. In others, the eldest son has been declared the only legal heir. There are also instances where the entire system of inheritance distribution has been replaced by the system of joint family property. In still other instances, the shares of women have been made equal to those of men. In our time a few Muslim states, in imitation of the West, even contrived a new form of disobedience. This consists of imposing death duties so that governments, too, become one of the heirs of the deceased, an heir whose share God had altogether failed to mention! This is despite the fact that under Islamic dispensation governments may assume control of a dead man's inheritance only if it is either unclaimed or if the person concerned has specifically so bequeathed part of his inheritance.

(26) In these two (verses 15-16)the first, preliminary directives for the punishment for unlawful sexual intercourse are stated. The first verse deals with women. The punishment laid down was to confine them until further directives were revealed. The second verse (i.e. 16) relates to both sexes. The injunction lays down that they should be punished - that is, they should be beaten and publicly reproached. Later, another injunction was revealed see (Surah al-Nur 24- 2) which laid down that both the male and female should be given a hundred lashes. These injunctions are necessarily of a preliminary nature since the people of Arabia were neither used to obeying the orders of any established government, the verdicts of any courts of law nor to following any legal code; it would therefore have been unwise to try to force acceptance of a penal code upon them so soon after the establishment of the Islamic state. In due course, the punishments for unlawful sexual intercourse, for slanderous accusations of unchastity against women, and for theft were laid down in their definitive form and served as the basis of that detailed penal code which was enforced by the Prophet (peace be on him) and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs.

The apparent difference between the contents of the two verses led al-Suddi to the misconceived belief that the first verse lays down the punishment for married women, and the second that for unmarried men and women. This is a tenuous explanation unsupported by any serious evidence and argument. Even less convincing is the opinion expressed by Abu Muslim al-Isfahani that the first verse relates to lesbian relations between females, and the second to homosexual relations between males. It is strange that al-Isfahani ignored the basic fact that the Qur'an seeks merely to chart a broad code of law and morality and hence deals only with fundamental questions. It is inconsistent with the majestic style of the Qur'an to discuss secondary details which have been left to people to decide through the exercise of their legal judgement. It is for this reason that when the problem of fixing a punishment for sodomy came up for consideration after the time of the Prophet (peace be on him), none of the Companions thought that the above-mentioned verse contained any relevant injunction.

تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ۝١٣

(4-13) These are the bounds set by Allah. Allah will make the man who obeys Allah and His Messenger enter the Gardens beneath which rivers flow. He will abide there for ever. That is the mighty triumph.

وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَهٗ يُدْخِلْهُ نَارًا خَالِدًا فِيْهَا وَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿١٤﴾

(4-14) And he who disobeys Allah and His Messenger and transgresses the bounds set by Him - him shall Allah cause to enter the Fire. There he will abide. A humiliating chastisement awaits him.* (25 a)

وَالّٰتِيْ يَاْتِيْنَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِّسَآئِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهِدُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ اَرْبَعَةً مِّنْكُمْ فَاِنْ شَهِدُوْا فَاَمْسِكُوْهُنَّ فِى الْبُيُوْتِ حَتّٰى يَتَوَفّٰهُنَّ الْمَوْتُ اَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيْلًا ﴿١٥﴾

(4-15) As for those of your women who are guilty of immoral conduct, call upon four from amongst you to bear witness against them. And if four men do bear witness, confine those women to their houses until either death takes them away or Allah opens some way for them.

وَالَّذٰنِ يَاْتِيٰنِهَا مِنْكُمْ فَاٰذُوْهُمَا فَاِنْ تَابَا وَاَصْلَحَا فَاَعْرِضُوْا عَنْهُمَا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١٦﴾

(4-16) Punish both of those among you who are guilty of this sin, then if they repent and mend their ways, leave them alone. For Allah is always ready to accept repentance. He is All-Compassionate. (26)

(26) In these two (Verses 15-16)the first, preliminary directives for the punishment for unlawful sexual intercourse are stated. The first verse deals with women. The punishment laid down was to confine them until further directives were revealed. The second verse (i.e. 16) relates to both sexes. The injunction lays down that they should be punished - that is, they should be beaten and publicly reproached. Later, another injunction was revealed see (Surah al-Nur 24-2) which laid down that both the male and female should be given a hundred lashes. These injunctions are necessarily of a preliminary nature since the people of Arabia were neither used to obeying the orders of any established government, the verdicts of any courts of law nor to following any legal code; it would therefore have been unwise to try to force

acceptance of a penal code upon them so soon after the establishment of the Islamic state. In due course, the punishments for unlawful sexual intercourse, for slanderous accusations of unchastity against women, and for theft were laid down in their definitive form and served as the basis of that detailed penal code which was enforced by the Prophet (peace be on him) and the Rightly-Guided Caliphs.

The apparent difference between the contents of the two verses led al-Suddi to the misconceived belief that the first verse lays down the punishment for married women, and the second that for unmarried men and women. This is a tenuous explanation unsupported by any serious evidence and argument. Even less convincing is the opinion expressed by Abu Muslim al-Isfahani that the first verse relates to lesbian relations between females, and the second to homosexual relations between males. It is strange that al-Isfahani ignored the basic fact that the Qur'an seeks merely to chart a broad code of law and morality and hence deals only with fundamental questions. It is inconsistent with the majestic style of the Qur'an to discuss secondary details which have been left to people to decide through the exercise of their legal judgement. It is for this reason that when the problem of fixing a punishment for sodomy came up for consideration after the time of the Prophet (peace be on him), none of the Companions thought that the above-mentioned verse contained any relevant injunction.

اِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السُّوْٓءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُوْنَ مِنْ قَرِيْبٍ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ١٧

(4-17) (And remember that) Allah's acceptance of repentance is only for those who commit evil out of ignorance and then soon repent. It is towards such persons that Allah turns graciously. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ اِنِّيْ تُبْتُ الْـٰٔنَ وَلَا الَّذِيْنَ يَمُوْتُوْنَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ ۗ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ١٨

(4-18) But of no avail is repentance of those who do evil until death approaches any one of them and then he says: 'Now I repent.' Nor is the repentance of those who die in the state of unbelief of any avail to them. For them We have kept in readiness a painful chastisement. (27)

(27) The Arabic word tawbah means 'to return, to come back'. A man's tawbah after he has sinned means that God's servant, who had turned away from his Master in disobedience, has repented, and has returned to obedience and service. On the other hand, tawbah on the part of God means that the attention of the Master, which had turned away from His erring servant, has once again turned towards him. In this verse, however, God makes it clear to His servants that tawbah is acceptable only from those who commit errors inadvertently and out of ignorance. Such persons will always find the door of God open for them whenever they turn to Him in repentance.

But this tawbah is not for those who pile sin upon sin throughout their lives in sheer indifference to God and who cry for pardon as soon as they see the angel of death approaching. The Prophet (peace be on him) has warned against this attitude in the following words: 'God accepts the repentance of a slave until the gurgling (of death) begins.' (Tirmidhi, 'Da'wat', 98; Ibn Majah, 'Zuhd', 30; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, pp. 132 and 153, and vol. 3, pp. 425 - Ed.) For when the last leaf of a man's book of life has been turned, what opportunity remains for a man to return to righteous conduct? Likewise, if a person spends even the very last moment of his life in a state of disbelief and then on the threshold of the Next Life he comes to discover that the facts are quite contrary to what he had imagined, what sense is there for him to seek forgiveness?

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَآءَ كَرْهًا ۭ وَلَا تَعْضُلُوْهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوْا بِبَعْضِ مَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّاْتِيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ۚ وَعَاشِرُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۚ فَاِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوْهُنَّ فَعَسٰٓى اَنْ تَكْرَهُوْا شَيْـــًٔا وَّيَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيْرًا ١٩

(4-19) Believers! It is not lawful for you to become heirs to women against their will. [28] It is not lawful that you should put constraint upon them that you may take away anything of what you have given them; (you may not put constraint upon them) unless they are guilty of brazenly immoral conduct. [29] Live with your wives in a good manner. If you dislike them in any manner, it may be that you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good for you. [30]

(28) This means that the relatives of the husband should not treat the widow of the deceased as if she were a part of the inheritance and begin imposing their will on her. Upon the death of her husband a woman becomes independent. As soon as her legally-prescribed period of waiting ends, she is free to go to wherever she likes and to marry anyone she wishes.

(29) This permission is intended not in order to provide them with an excuse to misappropriate her property but to exercise a restraint on her conduct and prevent her from lewdness.

(30) This means that if the wife is either not beautiful or has some shortcoming because of which she does not seem attractive enough to her husband, the latter should not suddenly decide, in a fit of rage and disgust, to part with her. Rather he should act with patience and forbearance. It often happens that a woman lacks physical attraction but has other qualities which are of much greater value for the success of married life. Hence if such a woman finds the opportunity to express her qualities, the same husband who initially felt revulsion towards her becomes captivated by her attractive conduct and character. Sometimes in the early stages of married life a husband dislikes certain things in his wife, and this initial dislike may even grow to revulsion. Were a man to be patient and allow all the potentialities of the woman to be realized, it would become evident to him that her merits outweighed her weaknesses. Hence a man's haste in

taking the decision to rupture the matrimonial bond is not praiseworthy. Repudiation of marriage should be a man's last resort, a resort towards which he should turn only in unavoidable circumstances. The Prophet (peace be on him) has said: For God, divorce is the most reprehensible of all lawful things.' (Abu Da'ud, Talaq', 3; Ibn Majah, 'Talaq', 1 - Ed.) In another tradition the Prophet (peace be on him) said: 'Marry and do not go about divorcing. For God does not like men and women who keep on changing partners merely for a change of taste.' (al-Tabrani, cited by 'Ajluni in Kashf al-Khifa. vol. 1, p. 304 - Ed.)

وَ اِنْ اَرَدْتُّمُ اسْتِبْدَالَ زَوْجٍ مَّكَانَ زَوْجٍ وَّاٰتَيْتُمْ اِحْدٰىهُنَّ قِنْطَارًا فَلَا تَاْخُذُوْا مِنْهُ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اَتَاْخُذُوْنَهٗ بُهْتَانًا وَّ اِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿۲۰﴾

(4-20) And if you decide to dispense with a wife in order to take another, do not take away anything of what you might have given the first one, even if you had given her a heap of gold. Would you take it back by slandering her and committing a manifest wrong?

وَكَيۡفَ تَاۡخُذُوۡنَهٗ وَقَدۡ اَفۡضٰى بَعۡضُكُمۡ اِلٰى بَعۡضٍ وَّاَخَذۡنَ مِنۡكُمۡ مِّيۡثَاقًا غَلِيۡظًا ۝٢١

(4-21) How can you take it away after each one has enjoyed the other, and they have taken a firm covenant from you? (31)

(31) The 'firm covenant' in this verse refers to marriage. For marriage is a firm covenant of fidelity. It is only because a woman has faith in the firmness of this covenant that she entrusts herself to a man. If a man decides of his own will to break it, he has no right to withdraw the amount he offered his wife by way of bridal-due at the time of entering into that covenant. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, Vol. I, (Surah 2, n. 251)

وَلَا تَنۡكِحُوۡا مَا نَكَحَ اٰبَآؤُكُمۡ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا قَدۡ سَلَفَ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَّمَقۡتًا ؕ وَسَآءَ سَبِيۡلًا ۝٢٢

(4-22) Do not marry the women whom your fathers married, although what is past is past. (32) This indeed was a shameful deed, a hateful thing, and an evil way. (33)

(32) The Qur'an rounds off all statements prohibiting the objectionable features of the social life of the Jahiliyah period by condoning violations of those prohibitions prior to their revelation: 'What is past is past.' This has two meanings. First, that those concerned would not be punished for mistakes committed in their state of Ignorance, providing they rectified their conduct after the prohibitory injunction had been revealed. Second, that the prohibition of any ancient custom, usage and law did not mean that all acts which took place in the past would be nullified, and that all the consequences of those acts would be deemed void, and people absolved of all the obligations which ensued from them. If marriage with the step-mother, for instance, was prohibited it did not necessarily follow that the children of all such marriages which had been contracted in the past were to be reckoned illegitimate, and that the offspring from such marriages would be disinherited. Similarly, if a certain transaction was declared unlawful it did not mean that all such transactions which

had taken place prior to the prohibition should be deemed void and that all the earnings of people accumulated through those transactions would be either seized or declared illegitimate property.

(33) In Islamic law marrying women who fall in the prohibited degrees of marriage is a recognized criminal offence. According to traditions in the Hadith collections of Abu Da'ud, Nasa'i and Ahmad b. Hanbal, people guilty of this offence were punished by the Prophet (peace be on him) with death and confiscation of property. It appears from the tradition related by Ibn 'Abbas (found in the collection of Ibn Majah), that the Prophet (peace be on him) had devised the following general rule: 'Kill whosoever commits sexual intercourse with a woman forbidden to him' (Ibn Majah; 'Hudud', 13, 35; also Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, p. 300 - Ed.) There is some disagreement, however, among jurists on this question. Ahmad b. Hanbal is of the opinion that the convicted person should be put to death and his property confiscated. Abu Hanifah, Malik and Shafi'i are of the opinion that if a person commits sexual intercourse with a woman within the prohibited degrees he should be punished for adultery; and if he merely marries (but has not actually had sexual intercourse - Ed.) he should be subjected to severe punishment.

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ اُمَّهٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُكُمْ وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ وَعَمّٰتُكُمْ وَخٰلٰتُكُمْ وَبَنٰتُ الْاَخِ وَبَنٰتُ الْاُخْتِ وَاُمَّهٰتُكُمُ الّٰتِيْٓ اَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَاَخَوٰتُكُمْ مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَاُمَّهٰتُ نِسَآئِكُمْ وَرَبَآئِبُكُمُ الّٰتِيْ فِيْ حُجُوْرِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَآئِكُمُ الّٰتِيْ دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَكُوْنُوْا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَحَلَآئِلُ اَبْنَآئِكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ اَصْلَابِكُمْ وَاَنْ تَجْمَعُوْا بَيْنَ الْاُخْتَيْنِ اِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ۲۳

(4-23) Forbidden to you are your mothers, (34) your daughters, (35) your sisters, (36) your father's sisters and your mother's sisters, your brother's daughters and your sister's daughters, (37) your milk-mothers, your milk-sisters, (38) the mothers of your wives, (39) and the stepdaughters - who are your foster-children, (40) born of your wives with whom you have consummated the marriage; but if you have not consummated the marriage with them, there will be no blame upon you (if you marry their

daughters).

It is also forbidden for you to take the wives of the sons who have sprung from your loins [41] and to take two sisters together in marriage, [42] although what is past is past. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate. [43]

(34) The word 'mother' applies to one's step-mother as well as to one's real mother. Hence the prohibition extends to both. This injunction also includes prohibition of the grandmother, both paternal and maternal. There is disagreement on whether a woman with whom a father has had an unlawful sexual relationship is prohibited to his son or not. There are some among the early authorities who do not believe in such prohibition. But there are others who go so far as to say that a woman whom a father has touched with sexual desire becomes prohibited to the son. Likewise, there is disagreement among the scholars of the early period of Islam in regard to a woman with whom a person has had an illegitimate sexual relationship whether she is prohibited to his father or not. In the same way there has been disagreement in regard to a man with whom a mother or daughter has had an illegitimate sexual relationship, whether or not marriage with him is prohibited for both the mother and daughter. (See Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 113 ff., and Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2, pp. 33 f. - Ed.) There is a great deal of formal, legal discussion on this point. But even a little reflection makes it evident that if a man marries a woman who is at once the object of the desire of either his father or his son, and if a man marries a woman and is attracted to either her mother or daughter, this militates against the requirements of a righteous society. The spirit of the Law is opposed to the legal hair-splitting which makes a distinction between sexual relations that take place either within the marital framework or outside it, and between either touching or looking with desire and so on. The plain fact is that if the sexual passions of both the father and the son are focused on the same woman, or conversely, if the sexual passions of both the mother and daughter are focused on the same man, this situation is full of evil and mischief for family life and the Law can never tolerate it. The Prophet (peace be on him) has said: 'Whoever looks at the

genitals of a woman, both the mother and daughter of that woman become prohibited for him.' In another tradition, the Prophet (peace-be on him) said: 'God will not even care to look at the person who casts his look at the genitals of a woman as well as those of her daughter.' (Jassas, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. IV, p. 141.) These traditions bring out the intent of the Law very clearly.

(35) The injunction with regard to daughters applies to grand-daughters on both the paternal and maternal sides as well. There is disagreement, however, whether a daughter born of an illegitimate relationship becomes prohibited or not. According to Abu Hanifah, Malik and Ahmad b. Hanbal such a daughter is prohibited in the same way as a daughter born in wedlock; Shafi'i, however, is of the opinion that such daughters are not prohibited. The very idea, however, of marrying a girl who was born of one's own semen would be repulsive to any decent person.

(36) This applies to full sisters as well as to half-sisters.

(37) In all these relationships, no distinction is made between the full and step-relationships. The sister of a man's father or mother, whether full sister or step-sister, is prohibited to him. Likewise, the daughters of a man's brothers and sisters are prohibited just as if they were one's own daughters. (See Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2, pp. 31 ff. - Ed.)

(38) There is consensus among Muslims that if a boy or girl is breast-fed by a woman, that woman attains the status of mother, and her husband the status of father. It is forbidden to marry relatives through milk where the degree of relationship is such as /to constitute a bar to marriage in the case of blood-relations. The basis of this rule is the saying of the Prophet (peace be on him): 'Whatever is rendered prohibited by descent (nasab) is likewise rendered prohibited by breast-feeding.' (Bukhari, 'Shahadat', 4, 7,13,14; Muslim, 'Rida'ah', 1-14,26-30; etc. - Ed.) According to Abu Hanifah and Malik prohibition is established if a child suckles milk from a

woman's breast equal to that minimum quantity which nullifies fasting. But according to Ahmad b. Hanbal, it is established by three sucklings; and according to Shafi'i by five. There is also disagreement about the maximum age up to which breast-feeding leads to prohibition of marriage with the woman concerned. In this connection, jurists have expressed the following opinions:

(1) Suckling is of legal significance only when it occurs before a child has been weaned, and when milk is its main source of nourishment. If a child suckles from a woman's breast after having been weaned, this is legally no different from drinking anything else. This is the opinion of Umm Salamah and Ibn 'Abbas, and a tradition to this effect has also been reported from 'Ali. This is also the view of al-Zuhri, Hasan al-Basri, Qatadah, 'Ikrimah and Awza'i.

(2) Prohibition is established by breast-feeding during the first two years of a child's life. This is the view of 'Umar, Ibn Mas'ud, Abu Hurayrah and 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar. Among jurists, Shafi'i, Ahmad b. Hanbal, Abu Yusuf, Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Shaybani and Sufyan al-Thawri followed this view; and according to a report, so did Abu Hanifah. Malik largely followed this view, but he was of the opinion that if breast-feeding took place a month or two after the age of two, the prohibition would still remain in effect.

(3) The generally-reported opinion of Abu Hanifah and Zufar is that a bar to marriage is created by breast-feeding up to an age limit of two and a half years.

(4) Some other jurists are of the opinion that the prohibition comes into effect irrespective of the age when breast-feeding takes place. This opinion is based on the view that the effective

cause of the prohibition is a woman's milk, rather than the age of the person fed. Hence, even in the case of an older person, the same prohibition would apply as in the case of an infant. This is the view of 'A'isha and this has been supported on the basis of a tradition from 'Ali, which is presumably .authentic. Among the jurists this opinion has been followed by 'Urwah b. al-Zubayr, 'Ata', Layth b. Sa'd and Ibn Hazm. (On this subject see Jassas, Vol. 2, pp. 124 ff.; and Ibn Rushd, Biddyat al-Mujtahid, Vol. 2,'pp'. 35 ff. -Ed.)

(39) There is disagreement about prohibition in respect of the mother of the woman with whom one has merely contracted marriage (without having consummated it). Abu Hanifah, Malik, Ahmad b. Hanbal and Shafi'i believe that such a relationship is prohibited. 'Ali, however, holds the opinion that unless the marriage has been consummated the mother of one's wife does not become prohibited.

(40) The prohibitive restriction in regard to such girls is not based on the consideration of their having been brought up in the house of a step-father. The reference to the child's upbringing in his house points to the delicacy of this relationship. The jurists are almost unanimous that it is prohibited to marry one's step-daughter irrespective of whether or not she has been raised in the step-father's house.

(41) This restriction has been added because the widow of one's adopted son is, according to Islam, not prohibited. It is only the wife of one's own son who is prohibited. Likewise, the wives of grandsons (paternal and maternal) are prohibited to grandfathers (on both the mother's and father's side).

(42) The Prophet (peace be on him) has taught that it is prohibited for a man to combine in marriage an aunt - whether maternal or paternal - with her niece. The guiding principle is that it is prohibited to have as wives two women who, if one were male, would be prohibited to each other. (See Bidayat al-Mujtahid, Vol. 2, p. 41 - Ed.)

(43) This is an assurance that God would not call them to task for such misdeeds of the Jahiliyah period as combining two sisters in matrimony, provided they abstained from doing so in the future. See also(n. 32 above.) For this reason a man with two sisters as his wives is required to divorce one of them when he embraces Islam.

وَّالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ اِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ كِتٰبَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ وَاُحِلَّ لَكُمْ مَّا وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكُمْ اَنْ تَبْتَغُوْا بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ مُّحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ ۭ فَمَا اسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْهُنَّ فَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ فَرِيْضَةً ۭ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيْمَا تَرٰضَيْتُمْ بِهٖ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيْضَةِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ۲۴

(4-24) And also forbidden to you are all married women (muhsanat) except those women whom your right hands have come to possess (as a result of war). (44) This is Allah's decree and it is binding upon you. But it is lawful for you to seek out all women except these, offering them your wealth and the protection of wedlock rather than using them for the unfettered satisfaction of lust. And in exchange of what you enjoy by marrying them pay their bridal-due as an obligation. But there is no blame on you if you mutually agree to alter the settlement after it has been made. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

(44) Women who come as captives of war, leaving their husbands behind in Dar al-Harb (Domain of War), are not prohibited, for their marriage is nullified by virtue of their entry into Dar al-Islam (Domain of Islam). A man may marry such women and, if they happen to be his slave-girls, he may have sexual relations with them. There is disagreement, however, among jurists as to what should be done if both husband and wife have been taken captive together. Abu Hanifah and the jurists of his school are of the opinion that their marriage should remain intact. Malik and Shafi'i, on the other hand, argue that their matrimonial contract should be rendered void.

Many misunderstandings seem to persist about the right to have sexual relations with one's slave-girls. It is pertinent to call attention to the following regulations of Islam:

(1) Islam does not permit soldiers of the Islamic army to have sexual relations with women they capture in war. Islamic Law requires that such women should first be handed over to the

government, which then has the right to decide what should be done with them. It may either set them free unconditionally, release them on payment of ransom, exchange them for Muslim prisoners of war held by the enemy or distribute them among the soldiers. A soldier may have sexual relations only with that woman who has been entrusted to him by the government.

(2) Even then, he may not have sexual relations with her until at least one menstrual period has expired; this is in order to establish that she is not already pregnant. If the woman concerned is pregnant one may not have sexual relations with her until after the birth of her child.

(3) It is not necessary for female captives of war to be People of the Book in order that sexual relations with them be permitted. The man to whom such a woman is entrusted has the right to have sexual relations with her regardless of her religious affiliations.

(4) Only that person to whom a female captive has been entrusted has the right to have sexual relations with her. Any child born to her will be regarded as the legitimate child of her master, and will be entitled to all the rights laid down by the Law for one's issue. Moreover, once such a woman has given birth to a child she may not be sold to anyone, and on the death of her master she automatically becomes a free person.

(5) If the master allows the woman to marry someone else he ceases to have the right to sexual relations with her but retains the right to have her serve him in other ways.

(6) Although the Law has fixed the maximum number of wives at four, it has set no limit with regard to slave-girls. The Law does not lay down a limit in order to encourage people to accumulate huge armies of slave-girls, and thereby turn their homes into dens of sexual enjoyment. Rather the Law does not define the limit because the effects of war and the total number of female captives that would have to be disposed of after a certain war are unpredictable.

(7) In the same way as other rights of property are transferable, so are the proprietary rights regarding the captives of war that have been legally entrusted to a man by the state.

(8) Since the regular conferment of property rights is as legal an act as that of marriage, there is no basis for a person who feels no revulsion towards the idea of marriage to feel revulsion towards the idea of having sexual relations with a slave-girl duly entrusted to him.

(9) If a government confers proprietary rights to a man over a female captive of war it forfeits the right to withdraw those rights in the same way as the guardian (wali) of a woman ceases to have the right to withdraw his agreement to the marriage proposal after the marriage has been contracted.

(10) If a military commander permitted his soldiers to temporarily use the female captives as objects of sexual desire and distributed them among the soldiers for that purpose, such an act would be considered unlawful by Islamic Law. Such an act is not essentially different from fornication or adultery. For details see my book Tafhimat, vol. 2, pp. 366-84, and Rasai'il wa Masa'il, 6th edition, Lahore, 1976, Vol. 3, pp. 102-4.

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا اَنْ يَّنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنٰتِ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ فَمِنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ فَتَيٰتِكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاِيْمَانِكُمْ ؕ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ ۚ فَانْكِحُوْهُنَّ بِاِذْنِ اَهْلِهِنَّ وَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ مُحْصَنٰتٍ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحٰتٍ وَّلَا مُتَّخِذٰتِ اَخْدَانٍ ۚ فَاِذَاۤ اُحْصِنَّ فَاِنْ اَتَيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنٰتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَاَنْ تَصْبِرُوْا خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۲۵﴾

(4-25) And those of you who cannot afford to marry free, believing women (muhsanat), then marry such believing women whom your right hands possess. Allah knows all about your faith. All of you belong to one another. (45) Marry them, then, with the leave of their guardians, and give them their bridal-due in a fair manner that they may live in the protection of wedlock rather than be either mere objects of unfettered lust or given to secret love affairs. Then if they become guilty of immoral conduct after they have entered into wedlock, they shall be liable to half the penalty to which free women (muhsanat) are liable. (46) This relaxation is for those of you who fear to fall into sin by remaining unmarried. (47) But if you persevere, it is better for you. Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

(45) The difference between the status of people is relative. All Muslims are alike. If there is any true distinction its basis is a person's faith and faith is not an exclusive privilege of the rich or so-called upper classes of the society. So it is possible for a slave-girl to be superior, in respect of her faith and morals, to a woman belonging to the elite of a society.

(46) A superficial reading of this verse can lead to the mistaken conclusion, as Khawarij and others have done, that stoning is not the prescribed punishment for adultery. Such people ask: If stoning is the prescribed punishment for extra-marital sexual intercourse, then how is it possible to halve that punishment with regard to slave-girls? Such people have not noted carefully the wording of this verse. In this section see (Verses 24-5) the term muhsanat (protected women) is used in two different meanings.

First, it is used in the sense of 'married women', that is, those who enjoy the protection of their husbands.

Second, it is used in the sense of 'women belonging to families', i.e. those who enjoy the protection of families even though they may not be married. In the verse under discussion, the word muhsanat is used in the latter sense, i.e. in the sense of women who enjoy the protection of families as opposed to slave-girls. At the same time, the word is also used in the first meaning, when slave-girls have acquired the protection accorded by the contract of marriage (fa idha uhsinna), they will be liable to the punishment laid down in this verse if they have unlawful Sexual intercourse.

It is therefore apparent that a free woman enjoys two kinds of protection. One is the protection of her family through which she remains protected even when she is not married. The second is the protection of her husband, which reinforces the protection of the family that she already enjoys. As long as the slave-girl remains a slave, she does not enjoy the protection of the family. However, when she is married she has the protection of her husband - and of her husband alone. This protection is partial. Even after marriage she is neither liberated from the bond of her master nor does she attain the status enjoyed by free women. The punishment prescribed for a married slave-girl is accordingly half the punishment of an unmarried free woman rather than half that of a married free woman.

This also explains that the punishment for unlawful sexual intercourse (zina) laid down in (Surah al-Nur 24- 2)refers to the offence committed by unmarried free women alone, and it is in comparison with their punishment that the punishment of married slave women has been laid down as half. As for free married women, they deserve more severe punishment than the unmarried free women (muhsanat) for they violate the double protection. Even though the Qur'an does not specifically mention punishment by stoning it does allude to it in a subtle manner.

(47) That is, if a man cannot afford to marry a free woman then he should marry a slave-girl with the permission of her master.

يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنَنَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوْبَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ۝٢٦

(4-26) Allah wants to make all this clear to you, and to guide you to the ways which the righteous have followed in the past. He will turn graciously towards you. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (48)

(48) Here a general reference is made to the directives embodied in this surah, as well as those revealed earlier in Surah al-Baqarah and which deal with social and collective matters. It is stressed that these directives reveal those lasting principles observed by the Prophets and their followers from the earliest times. It is merely out of His grace and benevolence that God liberated them from their state of Ignorance (Jahiliyah) and opened to them the way of life of the righteous.

وَاللّٰهُ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّتُوْبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَيُرِيْدُ الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّبِعُوْنَ الشَّهَوٰتِ اَنْ تَمِيْلُوْا مَيْلًا عَظِيْمًا ۝٢٧

(4-27) And Allah indeed wants to turn graciously towards you; but those who follow their lusts would want you to drift far away from the right way. (49)

(49) This refers to the hypocrites, the ultra-conservatives and the Jews who lived on the outskirts of Madinah. Both the hypocrites and the conservatives were incensed at the reforms introduced by Islam, as these were diametrically opposed to the age-old customs and traditions of their society and culture. The reforms were numerous: a share of the inheritance was assigned

to daughters; widows were liberated from bondage to the will of their husbands' families and were granted the freedom to marry whomever they wished after the expiry of the waiting-period ('iddah); marriage with one's step-mother and with two sisters together was prohibited; adopted sons were disinherited; and a foster-father's marriage with either the divorced or widowed wife of his adopted son was declared lawful. These and other such reforms were so totally opposed to the customary laws of the Arabs that it was impossible for the elders and the blind devotees of the ways of their forefathers not to protest against them vehemently. They long continued to grumble against these injunctions. Mischievous people pointed to these innovations and exploited them by provoking people against the Prophet's movement of reform. For instance, they would meet those born as a result of the marriage which had been prohibited by Islam and try to infuriate them by saying that according to the new-fangled teachings of Muhammad (peace be on him) the relationship between their parents was unlawful.

The Jews, on the other hand, had woven a complex network of laws and regulations for themselves. The result was that they had forbidden a great number of things which were, in fact, lawful. Additionally, they had introduced a number of superstitions into God's Law. It was argued that the simple and straightforward law of the Qur'an was out of tune with the tastes and temperaments of both the religious leaders and the ordinary people. The Qur'anic injunctions simply infuriated them and as soon as they came to know of any Qur'anic law, they vehemently denounced it. They expected the Qur'an to endorse and validate all the legal deductions and all the superstitions and myths of their forefathers, and to treat them as an integral part of the law of God. If the Qur'an would not do so then they would refrain from recognizing it as the Book of God.

Let us take the following as an example. According to Jewish usage, a woman was considered completely unclean during her menstrual period. Hence, they neither ate the food she cooked, drank from the cup of water she offered nor even sat with her. It was even considered unwholesome to be touched by her.

Thus for a few days every month a woman virtually became an untouchable in her own house. Owing to the influence of the Jews the same custom had found its way into the Arab families of Madinah. When the Prophet (peace be on him) arrived in Madinah, he was asked about this matter. In response to this query (Verse 222 of Surah al-Baqarah) was revealed. In the light of the principle embodied in the verse the Prophet (peace be on him) made it clear that it was unlawful to have sexual intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period; but it was only that relationship, and no other, that was unlawful. (See Bukhari, 'Hayd', 2, 3; Nasa'i, 'Hayd', 9, 13, 16, 19, and 'Ahkam', 13 - Ed.) This caused uproar among the Jews. They claimed that Muhammad (peace be on him) was bent upon reversing all their legal injunctions to the extent that he wanted to legalize whatever they held as prohibited and prohibit whatever they held as lawful.

يُرِيۡدُ اللّٰهُ اَنۡ يُّخَفِّفَ عَنۡكُمۡ ۚ وَخُلِقَ الۡاِنۡسٰنُ ضَعِيۡفًا ﴿۲۸﴾

(4-28) Allah wants to lighten your burdens, for man was created weak.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا تَاۡكُلُوۡۤا اَمۡوَالَكُمۡ بَيۡنَكُمۡ بِالۡبَاطِلِ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ تَكُوۡنَ تِجَارَةً عَنۡ تَرَاضٍ مِّنۡكُمۡ ۟ وَلَا تَقۡتُلُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُمۡ رَحِيۡمًا ﴿۲۹﴾

(4-29) Believers! Do not devour one another's possessions wrongfully; rather than that, let there be trading by mutual consent. [50] You shall not kill yourselves. [51] Surely Allah is ever Compassionate to you. [52]

(50) The expression 'wrongfully' embraces all transactions which are opposed to righteousness and which are either legally or morally reprehensible. By contrast, 'trade' signifies the mutual transfer of benefits between the parties concerned, such as that underlying those transactions in which one person provides whatever satisfies the needs of another person and is paid in return. 'Mutual consent' means that the exchange should be free of undue pressure, fraud and deception. Although bribery and interest apparently represent transactions based on mutual consent, closer examination reveals that such consent takes place by constraint and under pressure. In games of chance, too, the participants seem to consent freely to the outcome. This kind of consent, however, is due to the expectation entertained by the participants that they will win. No one takes part anticipating loss. Fraudulent transactions also seem to be based on the mutual consent of the parties concerned. That kind of consent, however, is based on the false assumption that no fraud is involved in the transaction. Nobody who knew that he would be subjected to fraud would consent to be a party to that transaction.

(51) This can be considered either as complementary to the preceding sentence or as an independent statement. If it is complementary, it means that to consume the property of others by wrongful means is tantamount to courting one's own

destruction; for such practices corrupt society on such a scale that even the most cunning are not spared their destructive consequences. This is in addition to the severe punishment that is bound to be meted out to such people in the Next Life. Taken as an independent statement, it can mean either that one should not kill others or that one should not kill oneself. Both the words used and the sequence in which they have been placed by God in this verse make each of these three meanings feasible.

(52) God wishes His creatures well; their well-being and salvation please Him, and it is out of benevolence that He has forbidden things harmful to human beings.

وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَّظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصْلِيْهِ نَارًا ۭ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَي اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرًا ۝٣٠

(4-30) And whoever does this by way of transgression and injustice him shall We surely cast into the Fire; that indeed is quite easy for Allah.

اِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوْا كَبَاۗىِٕرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نُكَفِّرْ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مُّدْخَلًا كَرِيْمًا ۝٣١

(4-31) But if you avoid the major sins which you have been forbidden, We shall remit your (trivial) offences, (53) and cause you to enter an honourable abode.

(53) God is not overly exacting and severe in His judgements. He is not on the look out for trivial omissions and lapses on the part of His creatures in order to punish them. God is prepared to condone minor omissions, and may even spare a man from being presented with a charge-sheet provided his record is free of major sins. But if a man's record is full of major transgressions, he will be required to explain all the sins he has committed - both major and minor.

We need at this stage to grasp the essential differences between major and minor sins. After reflecting on this question, in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah, it seems to me - and God alone knows what is absolutely correct - that three elements turn an act into a major sin:

(2) Violation of rights - be it either the rights of God, of parents, of other human beings or even of one's own self. The greater a person's rights, the greater is the sin in violating them. Hence sin is characterized in the Qur'an as wrong-doing (zulm). It is for the same reason that associating others with God in His divinity is called the 'great wrong' in the Qur'an. See, for example, (Surah Luqman 31: 13 - Ed.)

(2) Insufficient fear of God, and arrogance and indifference towards Him, as a result of which man does not heed God's commandments, even willfully violates them, and deliberately desists from carrying them out. The greater the brazenness, temerity and fearlessness with which one disobeys God, the more heinous is the sin in His eyes. It is for this reason that sin is also termed ma'siyah (disobedience) and fisq. See, for instance, (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 26, 61); (Surah al-Hujurat 49: 11); (Surah al-Munafiqun 63: 6); (Surah Hud 11: 59); (Surah Al 'Imran 3: 112); (Surah al-Nisa' 4- 42); (Surah al-Maidah 5: 78); and passim for verbal forms derived from the word ma'siyah and fisq - Ed.)

(3) Sin is aggravated by breaking those bonds and relationships on which the peace and tranquility of social order rest. These bonds include the relationship between a man and his Lord, as well as that between a man and his fellow-beings. The more important a bond is, the greater is the harm done to the peace of human society when that bond is broken. Likewise, the stronger the expectation that the sanctity of a certain bond will be honoured, the greater is the sin incurred through its desecration. Let us take the case of unlawful sexual intercourse in its various degrees. This act is inimical to the existence of a sound social order and is therefore a major sin. But in certain cases the sin becomes even graver. For instance, it is more serious if

committed by a married person than by one who is unmarried. Similarly, unlawful sexual intercourse with a married woman is graver than with an unmarried woman. Again, to commit this act with one's neighbors is more heinous than with others, and to commit this act with women within the prohibited degrees, such as one's sister, daughter or mother, is far more abominable than with others. Further still, it is a much graver sin to commit such an act in places of worship than elsewhere. The difference in the degree of such sinfulness is based on the considerations we have mentioned above. Wherever the sanctity "of a relationship is normally respected, wherever there is a bond which deserves to be held sacred, and wherever the disruption of a particular relationship is likely to result in greater harm and corruption, the gravity of the sin increases. This is why in certain places the Qur'an uses the term fujur to denote sin. See, for instance, (Surah al-Qiyamah 75: 5); (Surah al-Infitar 82: 14); (Surah al-Shams 91 : 8 - Ed.)

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهٖ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوْا ؕ وَلِلنِّسَآءِ نَصِيْبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ ؕ وَسْـَٔلُوا اللّٰهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمًا ۝٣٢

(4-32) Do not covet what Allah has conferred more abundantly on some of you than others. Men shall have a share according to what they have earned, and women shall have a share according to what they have earned. Do ask of Allah His bounty. Allah has full knowledge of everything. (54)

(54) This verse embodies a very important directive. By heeding it, man would be able to achieve a great measure of peace and tranquility. God has not created all men alike. Some are handsome while others are ugly. The voices of some are sweet and those of others repulsive. Some are physically strong others are weak. Some have sound limbs others have inherent deformities. Some possess outstanding physical and mental abilities while others lack them. Some are born in favorable circumstances and others not. Some have been endowed with more resources than others. It is this diversity which gives variety to human civilization, and hence serves a useful purpose.

Whenever man superimposes distinctions of his own over and above this natural inequality he disrupts the natural order of things, and paves the way for corruption. Likewise, when anyone attempts to obliterate all differences between human beings he in fact engages in a war against nature and inflicts wrongs of another kind. Man is naturally inclined to feel uneasy whenever he sees someone else ahead of him. This is the root of jealousy and envy, of cut-throat competition and animosity, of mutual strife and conflict. These feelings often obsess a person to such a degree that whenever fair means do not prove effective, he resorts to unfair means to achieve his ambitions. In the present verse, God directs us not to allow this kind of mentality to take hold of us. The import of the directive is that one should not yearn for the good that God has bestowed on others. One should rather pray to God to bestow upon one the good which is in one's best interests according to God's wisdom and knowledge.

The statement that 'men shall have a share according to what they have earned and women shall have a share according to what they have earned' seems to mean, to the best of my understanding, that men and women shall have their shares of good and evil, depending on the good and evil they have earned in using the resources bestowed upon them by God.

وَلِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مَوٰلِيَ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوٰلِدَانِ وَالْاَقْرَبُوْنَ ۭ وَالَّذِيْنَ عَقَدَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ فَاٰتُوْهُمْ نَصِيْبَهُمْ ۭ
اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدًا ٣٣؀

(4-33) And to everyone We have appointed rightful heirs to what the parents and near of kin might leave behind. As to those with whom you have made a solemn covenant, give them their share. Allah watches over all things. (55)

(55) According to Arab customary law, those who concluded compacts of alliance and friendship also became mutual heirs. Likewise, an adopted son inherited from his foster-father. While

abrogating this customary law, this verse reveals that inheritance goes to one's kin according to the rules for the distribution of inheritance laid down by God Himself. However, if a man has made commitments to people, he has the right to give away to them whatever he wishes during his lifetime.

اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوۡنَ عَلَى النِّسَآءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعۡضَهُمۡ عَلٰى بَعۡضٍ وَّبِمَاۤ اَنۡفَقُوۡا مِنۡ اَمۡوَالِهِمۡ ؕ فَالصّٰلِحٰتُ قٰنِتٰتٌ حٰفِظٰتٌ لِّلۡغَيۡبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَالّٰتِىۡ تَخَافُوۡنَ نُشُوۡزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوۡهُنَّ وَاهۡجُرُوۡهُنَّ فِى الۡمَضَاجِعِ وَاضۡرِبُوۡهُنَّ ۚ فَاِنۡ اَطَعۡنَكُمۡ فَلَا تَبۡغُوۡا عَلَيۡهِنَّ سَبِيۡلًا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيۡرًا ۳۴

(4-34) Men are the protectors and maintainers of women (56) because Allah has made one of them excel over the other, (57) and because they spend out of their possessions (to support them). Thus righteous women are obedient and guard the rights of men in their absence under Allah's protection. (58) As for women of whom you fear rebellion, admonish them, and remain apart from them in beds, and beat them. (59) Then if they obey you, do not seek ways to harm them. Allah is Exalted, Great.

(56) A qawwam or qayyim is a person responsible for administering and supervising the affairs of either an individual or an organization, for protecting and safeguarding them and taking care of their needs.

(57) The verb used here - a derivative of the root fdl - is not used to mean that some people have been invested with superior honour and dignity. Rather it means that God has endowed one of the sexes (i.e. the male sex) with certain qualities which He has not endowed the other sex with, at least not to an equal extent. Thus it is the male who is qualified to function as head of the family. The female has been so constituted that she should live under his care and protection.

(58) It is reported in a tradition from the Prophet (peace be on him) that he said: 'The best wife is she who, if you look at her, will please you; who, if you bid her to do something, will obey; and who will safeguard herself and your property in your absence.' (Cited by Ibn Kathir, and reported by Tabari and Ibn Abi Hatim. See Mukhtasar Tafsir Ibn Kathir, 3 vols., ed. Muhammad 'All al-Sabuni, 7th edition, Beirut, 1402 A.H./1981 C.E.; vol. 1, p. 385 and n. 1 - Ed.) This tradition contains the best explanation of the above verse. It should be borne in mind, however, that obedience to God has priority over a woman's duty to obey her husband. If a woman's husband either asks her to disobey God or prevents her from performing a duty imposed upon her by God, she should refuse to carry out his command. Obedience to her husband in this case would be a sin. However, were the husband to prevent is wife from performing either supererogatory Prayer or Fasting - as distinct from the obligatory ones - she should obey him, for such acts would not be accepted by God if performed by a woman in defiance of her husband's wish. (See Abu Da'ud, 'Sawm', 73; Ibn Majah, 'Siyam', 53 - Ed.)

(59) This does not mean that a man should resort to these three measures all at once, but that they may be employed if a wife adopts an attitude of obstinate defiance. So far as the actual application of these measures is concerned, there should, naturally, be some correspondence between the fault and the punishment that is administered. Moreover, it is obvious that wherever a light touch can prove effective one should not resort to sterner measures. Whenever the Prophet (peace be on him) permitted a man to administer corporal punishment to his wife, he did so with reluctance, and continued to express his distaste for it. And even in cases where it is necessary, the Prophet (peace be on him) directed men not to hit across the face, nor to beat severely nor to use anything that might leave marks on the body. (See Ibn Majah, 'Nikah', 3 - Ed.)

وَ اِنۡ خِفۡتُمۡ شِقَاقَ بَيۡنِهِمَا فَابۡعَثُوۡا حَكَمًا مِّنۡ اَهۡلِهٖ وَحَكَمًا مِّنۡ اَهۡلِهَا ۚ اِنۡ يُّرِيۡدَاۤ اِصۡلٰحًا
يُّوَفِّقِ اللّٰهُ بَيۡنَهُمَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيۡمًا خَبِيۡرًا ۳۵

(4-35) If you fear a breach between the two, appoint an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both want to set things right, (60) Allah will bring about reconciliation between them. Allah knows all, is well aware of everything. (61)

(60) The statement: 'if they both want to set things right', may be interpreted as referring either to the mediators or to the spouses concerned. Every dispute can be resolved providing the parties concerned desire reconciliation, and the mediators too are keen to remove the misunderstandings between them and to bring them together.

(61) Whenever the relationship between a husband and a wife starts to break down, an attempt should first be made to resolve the dispute at the family level, before it is aggravated and leads to the disruption of the matrimonial tie. The procedure to be followed is that two persons, one on behalf of each family, should be nominated to look into the matter together and devise means whereby the misunderstanding between the spouses may be brought to an end. Who should nominate these mediators? God has not specified this so as to allow people full freedom to choose the most convenient arrangement. The parties would be free, for instance, to decide that the mediators be nominated either by the spouses themselves or by the elders of their respective families. If the dispute is brought before the court, the latter also has the right to nominate mediators, representing the families of both parties, before referring the matter for judicial verdict.

There is disagreement among Muslim jurists about the extent of the mediators' authority. The Hanafi and Shafi'i schools are of the opinion that they normally have no authority to issue a binding verdict. All they may do is to recommend the solution they advocate, whereafter the spouses have the right either to accept or to reject it. The exception is if the spouses have nominated the mediators to act on their behalf in regard to either talaq or khul': they will then be bound by their verdict. This is the

opinion of the Hanafi and Shafi'i schools. Another group of jurists argues that the authority of the mediators is confined to deciding how the spouses should reconcile their differences, and does not extend to the annulment of marriage. This is the opinion of Hasan al-Basri and Qatadah, among others. Yet another group holds the opinion that the mediators have full authority both in respect of reconciliation and annulment of marriage. This is the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas, Sa'id b. Jubayr, Ibrahim al-Nakha'i, al-Sha'bi, Muhammad b. Sinn and several other authorities. The precedents which have come down from early Islam, however, are the judgements of 'Uthman and 'Ali. These indicate that they conferred upon the mediators the authority to issue judgements binding on both parties. When the dispute between 'Aqil b. Abi Talib and his wife Fatimah b. 'Utbah b. Rabi'ah came up for the judgement of 'Uthman, he nominated Ibn 'Abbas and Mu'awiyah b. Abi Sufyan from the families of the husband and the wife respectively. He also told them that if they thought that separation was preferable, they should declare the marriage annulled. In a similar dispute 'Ali nominated mediators and authorized them either to bring about reconciliation or annul the marriage, whichever they considered appropriate. This shows that the mediators do not have judicial authority as such. (See the commentaries of Ibn Kathir and Jassas on this verse -Ed.) Such authority, however, may be conferred upon them by the courts, in which case their decision will have the force of a judicial verdict.

وَاعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوْا بِهٖ شَيْـًٔا وَّ بِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا وَّبِذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَالْجَارِ ذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْۢبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُكُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُوْرَا ۙ ۳۶

(4-36) Serve Allah and ascribe no partner to Him. Do good to your parents, to near of kin, to orphans, and to the needy, and to the neighbour who is of kin and to the neighbour who is a stranger, and to the companion by your side, (62) and to the wayfarer, and to those whom your right hands possess. Allah does not love the arrogant and the boastful,

(62) The expression al-sahib bi al-janb (the companion by your side) embraces those with whom one has friendly relations of an abiding nature as well as those with whom one's relationship is transient: for instance, either the person who walks beside one on the way to the market or who sits beside one while buying things from the same shop or one's fellow traveller. Even this temporary relationship imposes certain claims on every refined and decent person - that he should treat him, as far as possible, in a kind and gracious manner and avoid causing him any inconvenience.

الَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُوْنَ مَآ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۭ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ۝۳۷

(4-37) who are niggardly and bid others to be niggardly and conceal the bounty which Allah has bestowed upon them. (63) We have kept in readiness a humiliating chastisement for such deniers (of Allah's bounty).

(63) Concealing God's bounty is to live, as if God had not bestowed that bounty. If anyone has considerable wealth and yet lives at a standard strikingly lower than that warranted by his income, if he shuns spending on himself and his family, and also on helping other creatures of God, and avoids providing financial support to any philanthropic cause, then he creates the false impression of being in a state of financial stringency. This is sheer ingratitude to God. The Prophet (peace be on him) is reported, according to a tradition, as saying: 'If God confers a bounty on somebody, He would like to see that benefaction displayed.' (Ibn Kathir, vol. 4, p. 486 - Ed.) This means that a person's day-to-day life, his eating and drinking, his dress and his abode and his spending on others, all these should reflect God's bounty.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُنْفِقُوْنَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ رِئَاۗءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّكُنِ الشَّيْطٰنُ لَهٗ قَرِيْنًا فَسَاۗءَ قَرِيْنًا ۝۳۸

(4-38) Allah does not love those who spend out of their wealth to make a show of it to people when they believe neither in Allah nor in the Last Day. And he who has taken Satan for a companion has indeed taken for himself a very bad companion.

وَمَاذَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ لَوۡ اٰمَنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ وَاَنۡفَقُوۡا مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِهِمۡ عَلِيۡمًا ۳۹

(4-39) What harm would have befallen them if they had believed in Allah and the Last Day, and spent on charity what Allah had bestowed upon them as sustenance? For Allah indeed has full knowledge of them.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَظۡلِمُ مِثۡقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ ۚ وَاِنۡ تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُّضٰعِفۡهَا وَيُؤۡتِ مِنۡ لَّدُنۡهُ اَجۡرًا عَظِيۡمًا ۴۰

(4-40) Indeed Allah wrongs none, not even as much as an atom's weight. Whenever a man does good, He multiplies it two-fold, and bestows out of His grace a mighty reward.

فَكَيۡفَ اِذَا جِئۡنَا مِنۡ كُلِّ اُمَّةٍ ۢ بِشَهِيۡدٍ وَّجِئۡنَا بِكَ عَلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ شَهِيۡدًا ۴۱

(4-41) Consider, then, when We shall bring forward witnesses from every community, and will bring you (O Muhammad!) as a witness against them all. (64)

(64) The Prophet of each age will stand as a witness before God against his people; he will testify that he conveyed to them the true way of life, and showed them the right outlook and the fundamentals of moral conduct revealed to him by God. The testimony of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) will be to the same effect, and the Qur'an indicates that he will stand as a witness to the period beginning with his advent as a Prophet right through to the Day of Judgement. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 3, n. 69.)

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّوَدُّ الَّذِيْ نَ كَفَرُوْ ا وَعَصَوُا الرَّسُوْلَ لَوْ تُسَوّٰى بِهِ مُ الْ اَرْضُ ۭ وَلَا يَكْتُمُوْنَ اللّٰ حَدِيْثًا ۴۲؀

(4-42) Those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger will wish on that Day that the earth were levelled with them. They will not be able to conceal anything from Allah.

يٰٓاَيُّ ا الَّذِيْ نَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاَنْ تُمْ سُكَارٰى حَتّٰى تَعْلَمُوْ ا مَا تَقُوْلُوْ نَ وَلَا جُنُبًا اِلَّا عَابِرِيْ سَبِيْلٍ حَتّٰى تَغْتَسِلُوْا ۭ وَاِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَّرْضٰٓى اَوْ عَلٰي سَفَرٍ اَوْ جَاۗءَ اَحَدٌ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنَ الْغَاۗىِٕطِ اَوْ لٰمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاۗءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوْ ا مَاۗءً فَتَيَمَّمُوْ ا صَعِيْدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوْا بِوُجُوْهِكُمْ وَاَيْدِيْكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا غَفُوْرًا ۴۳؀

(4-43) Believers! Do not draw near to the Prayer while you are intoxicated (65) until you know what you are saying (66) nor while you are defiled (67) - save when you are travelling - until you have washed yourselves. (68) If you are either ill or travelling or have satisfied a want of nature or have had contact with women (69) and can find no water, then betake yourselves to pure earth, passing with it lightly over your face and your hands. (70) Surely Allah is All-Relenting, All-Forgiving.

(65) This is the second in the chronological sequence of injunctions concerning intoxicants. We came across the first injunction in (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 219). In that verse God merely indicated that drinking wine was a great sin, making it clear that it was reprehensible in His sight. This was quite enough to make some Muslims give up liquor altogether, though many others still took intoxicating drinks: they sometimes stood up to pray while still under the influence of alcohol, so that they even made mistakes in their recitations. This second injunction was probably revealed at the beginning of 4 A.H., making it forbidden, thenceforth, to pray in a state of intoxication. This led people to alter their drinking times. They drank only at those hours when there was no fear of their remaining under the influence of intoxicants when the time for Prayer came. The injunction embodying unconditional prohibition of intoxicants was revealed not long afterwards. See (Surah al-Maidah 5: 90-1.)

It should also be borne in mind that the word used in the verse is derived from sukr, which embraces not merely intoxicating liquors but everything which causes intoxication. The injunction contained in the verse is valid even now, for though the use of intoxicants as such has been completely prohibited, praying in a state of intoxication is a graver sin.

(66) It is on this basis that the Prophet (peace be on him) directed anyone who is under the influence of sleep, and dozes off again and again during the Prayer, to stop praying and go to bed. (Ibn Kathir, vol. 4, p. 494-Ed.) Some people argue, on the basis of this verse, that the Prayer of one who does not understand the Arabic text of the Qur'an will not be accepted. Apart from taking things too far such a conclusion is not supported by the words in the text. The expression used by the Qur'an is neither ( ) nor even ( ). On the contrary, the expression is ( ) (i.e. until you know what you are saying, rather than 'until you understand' what you are saying). What is required is that while praying one should at least be conscious enough to know what one is uttering in the Prayer.

(67) The term janabah denotes the state of major ritual impurity, and is derived from the root meaning: 'to ward off'. The word ajnabi, meaning foreigner or stranger, is also derived from the same root. In Islamic terminology, janabah denotes the state of ritual impurity (in both male and female) which results from the act of intercourse or from seminal emission (either from sexual stimulation or from a wet dream).

(68) One group of jurists and Qur'anic commentators interpret this verse to mean that one should not enter a mosque in the state of major ritual impurity (janabah), unless out of necessity. This is the opinion of 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud, Anas b. Malik, Hasan al-Basri, Ibrahim al-Nakha'i and others. Another group thinks that

the reference here is to travel. In the opinion of this group, if a traveller is in the state of major ritual impurity he may resort to tayammum (i.e. symbolic ablution attained through wiping the hands and face with clean earth). See (Surah Al-Ma'idah 5: 6 and also n. 70) below - Ed.) This group considers it permissible to stay in the mosque in this state provided one has performed ablution. This is the view of 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, Sa'id b. Jubayr and some other authorities. The opinion that a traveller in the state of major impurity may perform ablution if he is unable to take a bath is supported by consensus, but while some authorities infer it from traditions others base it on the Qur'anic verse mentioned above. (See Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 201-6; and Ibn Kathir's commentary on this verse - Ed.)

(69) There is disagreement as to what is meant here by the verb lamastum, which literally means 'you touched'. 'Ali, Ibn 'Abbas, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, Ubayy b. Ka'b, Sa'id b. Jubayr, Hasan al-Basri and several other leading jurists are of the opinion that it signifies sexual intercourse. Abu Hanifah and his school, and Sufyan al-Thawri follow this view. But 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud and 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar hold that it signifies the act of touching, the mere placing of one's hand on a woman's body. This is the opinion adopted by Shafi'i. Other jurists take an intermediate position. Malik, for instance, is of the opinion that if a man and a woman touch each other with sexual desire, their ablution is nullified, and if they want to perform the Prayer they are obliged to renew their ablution. He sees nothing objectionable, however, in the mere fact of a man touching a woman's body, or vice versa, provided the act is not motivated by sexual desire. (See Ibn Kathir's commentary on this verse - Ed.-)

(70) The detailed rules of tayammum are as follows: A man who either needs to perform ablution or take a bath to attain the state of purity for ritual Prayer may resort to tayammum provided water is not available to him. Only then may he perform the Prayer. Permission to resort to tayammum, rather than make ablution with water or take a bath, is also extended to invalids

whose health is likely to be harmed by the use of water. We have tried to convey both shades of meaning in the translation of the verse by using the expression 'have had contact with' instead of 'touched' - Ed.

Tayammum literally means 'to turn to, to aim at, to head for, to intend'. The relevance of the term in the Islamic religious context is that when water is either not available or when its use is likely to cause harm one should 'turn to' clean earth.

There is some disagreement among jurists about the manner of performing tayammum. According to some, one should strike one's palms on the clean earth, then gently wipe one's face, then strike one's hands again and gently wipe one's hands and arms up to the elbows. This is the view of Abu Hanifah, Shafi'i, Malik and the majority of jurists. Among the Companions and Successors, 'Ali, 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, Hasan al-Basri, Sha'bi, Salim b. 'Abd Allah and many others are of the same opinion. Other jurists are of the view that it is sufficient to strike one's palms once on the clean earth, then wipe one's face and one's hands up to the wrist; it is not necessary to wipe the arms between the wrist and the elbow. This is the opinion of 'Ata', Makhul, Awza'i, and Ahmad b. Hanbal, and is generally followed by the Ahl al-Hadith. (Cf. Qurtubi, Ahkam al-Qur'an, vol. 5, pp. 239-41.)

Tayammum is not necessarily performed by striking one's palms on earth proper. It is sufficient to strike the palms on anything which either has dust over it or anything consisting of the dry elements of the earth. It may be asked how one attains purity by striking one's palms on the earth and then wiping one's hands and face with them. In fact tayammum is a useful psychological device to keep the sense of ritual purity and the sanctity of Prayer alive in man's mind even when water - the principal agent of purification - is not available. The value of tayammum is that even if a man is unable to use water - and no one knows how long this situation may persist - his sensitivity to

cleanliness and purity will endure. He will continue to observe the regulation laid down by the Law in respect of cleanliness and purity, and the distinction between the states in which one may and may not perform the Prayer will not be erased.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يَشْتَرُوْنَ الضَّلٰلَةَ وَيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَضِلُّوا السَّبِيْلَ ؕ ۴۴

(4-44) Have you not seen those to whom a portion of the Book was given? (71) They purchased error for themselves, and wish that you too lose the right way?

(71) The Qur'an often characterizes the scholars of the People of the Book as those who 'were given a portion of the Book'. The reason for the use of this expression, in the first place, is that they caused a part of the divine revelation to be lost. Moreover, they had detached themselves from the spirit and purpose of the divine revelation which was available to them. Their concern with the Scripture was confined to verbal discussions, arguments about legal minutiae, and speculation about subtle and involved philosophical and theological questions. This had so alienated even their religious leaders and scholars from the true concept of religion that they lost true religious devotion and piety.

وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاَعْدَآئِكُمْ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا ۙ وَّكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ نَصِيْرًا ﴿۴۵﴾

(4-45) Allah knows your enemies better and Allah suffices as a protector and Allah suffices as a helper.

مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَاسْمَعْ غَيْرَ مُسْمَعٍ وَّرَاعِنَا لَيًّا بِاَلْسِنَتِهِمْ وَطَعْنًا فِى الدِّيْنِ ؕ وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ قَالُوْا سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا وَاسْمَعْ وَانْظُرْنَا لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَاَقْوَمَ ۙ وَلٰكِنْ لَّعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ﴿۴۶﴾

(4-46) Among those who have become Jews (72) there are some who alter the words from their context, (73) and make a malicious play with their tongues and seek to revile the true faith. They say: 'We have heard and we disobey' (sami'na wa 'asayna), (74) 'Do hear us, may you turn dumb' (isma' ghayr musma') (75) and 'Hearken to us' (ra'ina). It would indeed have been better for them and more upright if they had said: 'We have heard and we obey' (sami'na wa ata'na) (76) and: 'Do listen to us, and look at us (with kindness)' (wa isma' wa unzurna). But Allah has cursed them because of their disbelief. Scarcely do they believe.

(72) It is to be noted that this expression means 'they became Jews', rather than 'they were Jews'. For, originally, they were nothing but Muslims, just as the followers of every Prophet are Muslims. Only later on did they become merely 'Jews'.

(73) This signifies three things. First, that they tampered with the text of the Scripture. Second, that they misinterpreted the Scripture and thereby distorted the meanings of the verses of the Book. Third, that they came and stayed in the company of the Prophet (peace be on him) and his Companions and listened to the conversations which took place there, then went among other people and misreported what they had heard. They did this with the malicious intent of bringing the Muslims into disrepute and thereby preventing people from embracing Islam.

(74) When the ordinances of God are announced to them, they loudly proclaim: 'Yes, we have heard', (sami'na), but then they whisper: 'And we disobeyed' ('asayna). Or else they pronounce ata'na ('we obey') with such a twist of the tongue that it becomes indistinguishable from 'asayna.

(75) Whenever they wanted to say something to the Prophet (peace be on him) they would say, 'isma" (listen), but added to this the expression, 'ghayr musma" which had several meanings. It could either be a polite expression, meaning that he was worthy of such deep respect that one should say nothing to his dislike or it could have a malicious implication, meaning that he did not deserve to be addressed by anybody. It also meant the imprecation: 'May God turn you deaf.'

(76) For an explanation of this see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, n. 108).

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ اٰمِنُوْا بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ نَّطْمِسَ وُجُوْهًا فَنَرُدَّهَا عَلٰٓى اَدْبَارِهَآ اَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَّآ اَصْحٰبَ السَّبْتِ ۭ وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا ۝۴۷

(4-47) O you who have been granted the Book! Do believe in what We have (now) revealed, which confirms the revelation which you already possess. (77) Do this before We alter countenances, turning them backwards, or lay a curse upon them as We cursed the Sabbath-men. (78) Bear in mind that Allah's command is done.

(77) See ibid., (Surah 3, n. 2).

(78) See ibid., (Surah 2, nn. 82 and 83).

اِنَّ اللّٰہَ لَا یَغۡفِرُ اَنۡ یُّشۡرَکَ بِہٖ وَیَغۡفِرُ مَا دُوۡنَ ذٰلِکَ لِمَنۡ یَّشَآءُ ۚ وَمَنۡ یُّشۡرِکۡ بِاللّٰہِ فَقَدِ افۡتَرٰۤی اِثۡمًا عَظِیۡمًا ﴿۴۸﴾

(4-48) Surely Allah does not forgive that a partner be ascribed to Him, (79) although He forgives any other sins for whomever He wills. (80) He who associates anyone with Allah in His divinity has indeed forged a mighty lie and committed an awesome sin.

(79) Although the People of the Book claimed to follow the Prophets and the Divine Books they had, in fact, fallen a prey to polytheism.

(80) The purpose of this verse is not to tell man that he may commit any sin as long as he does not associate others with God in His divinity. The object is rather to impress upon those who had begun to regard polytheism as a trivial matter that it constitutes the most serious offence in God's sight, an offence so serious that while other sins may be pardoned this will not. Jewish religious scholars were meticulous about questions of subsidiary importance, and devoted all their time to pondering over legal subtleties which their jurists had painstakingly elaborated by far-fetched deductions. Yet they treated polytheism so lightly that they neither abstained from it themselves nor tried to prevent their people from falling a prey to polytheistic ideas and practices nor found anything objectionable in establishing cordial relations with the polytheists nor in supporting them.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَی الَّذِیۡنَ یُزَکُّوۡنَ اَنۡفُسَہُمۡ ؕ بَلِ اللّٰہُ یُزَکِّیۡ مَنۡ یَّشَآءُ وَلَا یُظۡلَمُوۡنَ فَتِیۡلًا ﴿۴۹﴾

(4-49) Have you not seen those who boast of their righteousness, even though it is Allah Who grants righteousness

to whomsoever He wills? They are not wronged even as much as the husk of a date-stone (if they do not receive righteousness).

اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ يَفْتَرُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ ۭ وَكَفٰى بِهٖٓ اِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ۝۵۰

(4-50) See how they forge lies about Allah! This in itself is a manifest sin.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا نَصِيْبًا مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوْتِ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا هٰٓؤُلَاۗءِ اَهْدٰى مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا سَبِيْلًا ۝۵۱

(4-51) Have you not seen those to whom a portion of the Book was given? They believe in baseless superstitions (81) and taghut (false deities), (82) and say about the unbelievers that they are better guided than those who believe. (83)

(81) Jibt signifies 'a thing devoid of any true basis and bereft of all usefulness'. In Islamic terminology the various forms of sorcery, divination and soothsaying, in short all superstitions, are termed jibt. It is reported in a tradition that, 'to divine things from the cries of animals, or the traces of animals' paws, or the flight of birds, constitutes jibt. Thus, jibt may be roughly translated as 'superstition'. (See Abu Da'ud, Tibb', 23; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 477 and vol. 5, p. 60 - Ed.)

(82) For explanation see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 2, nn. 286 and 288).

(83) The obstinacy of the Jewish religious scholars had, reached such a point that they brazenly declared the followers of Muhammad (peace be on him) to be in greater error than even the polytheists of Arabia. This was despite the fact that they knew that the Muslims stood for absolute monotheism while their opponents believed in that undisguised polytheism which has been so vehemently denounced throughout the Bible.

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّلْعَنِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ نَصِيْرًا ۝۵۲

(4-52) Such are the ones whom Allah has cursed; and he whom Allah curses has none to come to his help.

اَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيْبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ فَاِذًا لَّا يُؤْتُوْنَ النَّاسَ نَقِيْرًا ۝۵۳

(4-53) Have they any share in the dominion (of Allah)? Had that been so, they would never have granted people even as much as the speck on a date-stone. (84)

(84) The Jews, who had judged the Muslims to be in error, are asked if they have some share in God's authority which entitles them to judge who is rightly guided and who is not. If the Jews really had any share in that authority, no one would receive so much as a penny from them, for their hearts are too small to even acknowledge the truth, let alone credit others with righteousness and goodness. This verse can also be understood somewhat differently so as to pose the following question to the Jews: 'Is it a matter of your possessing some dominion which you are reluctant to share with others?' Obviously, the question was merely one of acknowledging the Truth, and they were too grudging to credit others with it.

اَمْ يَحْسُدُوْنَ النَّاسَ عَلٰي مَآ اٰتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ فَقَدْ اٰتَيْنَآ اٰلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُمْ مُّلْكًا عَظِيْمًا ۝۵۴

(4-54) Do they envy others for the bounty that Allah has bestowed upon them? (85) (Let them bear in mind that) We bestowed upon the house of Abraham the Book and Wisdom, and We bestowed upon them a mighty dominion, (86)

(85) By implication, this query accurately portrays the state of mind of the Jews. They saw the Muslims being endowed with the grace and reward of God which they, notwithstanding their own

unworthiness had expected to fall to their share. By virtue of the advent of a great Prophet among the ummis of Arabia, a spiritual, moral and intellectual revolution had taken place which totally changed their practical life and ultimately led them to greatness and glory. It is this which aroused their spite and envy, and which was reflected in their unjustifiable remarks about the Muslims.

(86) This 'mighty dominion' refers to the position of world leadership and authority which a people attain by virtue of receiving the knowledge in the Book of God and acting according to its dictates.

فَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ اٰمَنَ بِهٖ وَمِنۡهُمۡ مَّنۡ صَدَّ عَنۡهُ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيۡرًا ۝۵۵

(4-55) whereupon some of them believed, and others turned away. [87] (Those who turn away), Hell suffices for a blaze.

(87) This is in response to the malicious remarks of the Israelites. What is being said is that they had no reason to feel jealous since both the Israelites and Ishmaelites were offspring of the same Abraham. Now, the leadership of the world had been promised only to those children of Abraham who followed the Book and Wisdom revealed by God. The Book and Wisdom had been sent down earlier to the Israelites, and to their discredit they had turned away from them. The same Book and Wisdom had now been made available to the Ishmaelites and they had decided to greet it with faith and gratitude.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا سَوۡفَ نُصۡلِيۡهِمۡ نَارًا ؕ كُلَّمَا نَضِجَتۡ جُلُوۡدُهُمۡ بَدَّلۡنٰهُمۡ جُلُوۡدًا غَيۡرَهَا لِيَذُوۡقُوا الۡعَذَابَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَزِيۡزًا حَكِيۡمًا ۝۵۶

(4-56) Surely We shall cast those who reject Our signs into the Fire; and as often as their skins are burnt out, We shall give

them other skins in exchange that they may fully taste the chastisement. Surely Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۭ لَهُمْ فِيْهَآ اَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ ۡ وَّنُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيْلًا ۝

(4-57) And those who believe and do good deeds, We shall cause them to enter the Gardens beneath which rivers flow. There they shall abide for ever. There they shall have spouses purified and there We shall cause them to enter a shelter with plenteous shade.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاْمُرُكُمْ اَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْاَمٰنٰتِ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهَا ۙ وَاِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ اَنْ تَحْكُمُوْا بِالْعَدْلِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهٖ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ سَمِيْعًۢا بَصِيْرًا ۝

(4-58) Allah commands you to deliver trusts to those worthy of them; and when you judge between people, to judge with justice. (88) Excellent is the admonition Allah gives you. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.

(88) Here the Muslims are forewarned against the evils which had afflicted the Israelites. One of the fundamental mistakes committed by the Israelites was that in the time of their degeneration they had handed over positions of trust (i.e. religious and political leadership) to incompetent, mean, immoral, dishonest and corrupt people. The result was that corruption spread throughout the nation. The Muslims are directed to take heed of this, and to entrust positions of responsibility only to those who are capable of shouldering the burdens of such positions. The other major weakness of the Israelites was that they completely lost their sense of justice. In their pursuit of either personal or national interests, honesty and good faith were often sacrificed. The Muslims, in the time of the Prophet (peace be on him), were themselves subjected to gross injustice at their hands. On the one side were the Prophet (peace be on him) and his followers, to whose purity of life and conduct the Jews were themselves witnesses. On the other side were those who

worshipped idols, buried their daughters alive, married their step-mothers and circumambulated the Ka'bah naked. Despite this, these so-called People of the Book felt no shame in declaring that the latter were closer to righteousness than the Muslims. After informing the Muslims of the iniquity of the Jews, God now warns them against committing similar injustices. They should rather declare what is right in the face of friend and foe alike, and judge between people with equity and justice.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَطِيۡعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيۡعُوا الرَّسُوۡلَ وَ اُولِى الۡاَمۡرِ مِنۡكُمۡ‌ۚ فَاِنۡ تَنَازَعۡتُمۡ فِىۡ شَىۡءٍ فَرُدُّوۡهُ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَالرَّسُوۡلِ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ تُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ‌ؕ ذٰلِكَ خَيۡرٌ وَّ اَحۡسَنُ تَاۡوِيۡلًا ۝۵۹

(4-59) Believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those from among you who are invested with authority; and then if you were to dispute among yourselves about anything refer it to Allah and the Messenger (89) if you indeed believe in Allah and the Last Day; that is better and more commendable in the end. (90)

(89) This verse is the cornerstone of the entire religious, social and political structure of Islam, and the very first clause of the constitution of an Islamic state. It lays down the following principles as permanent guidelines:

(1) In the Islamic order of life, God alone is the focus of loyalty and obedience. A Muslim is the servant of God before anything else, and obedience and loyalty to God constitute the centre and axis of both the individual and collective life of a Muslim. Other claims to loyalty and obedience are acceptable only insofar as they remain secondary and subservient, and do not compete with those owed to God. All loyalties which may tend to challenge the primacy of man's loyalty to God must be rejected. This has been expressed by the Prophet (peace be on him) in the following words: 'There may be no obedience to any

creature in disobedience to the Creator.' (Muslim, 'Iman', 37; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, p. 472 - Ed.)

(2) Another basic principle of the Islamic order of life is obedience to the Prophet (peace be on him). No Prophet, of course, is entitled to obedience in his own right. Obedience to Prophets, however, is the only practical way of obeying God, since they are the only authentic means by which He communicates His injunctions and ordinances to men. Hence, we can obey God only if we obey a Prophet. Independent obedience to God is not acceptable, and to turn one's back on the Prophets amounts to rebellion against God. The following tradition from the Prophet (peace be on him) explains this: 'Whoever obeyed me, indeed obeyed God; and whoever disobeyed me, indeed disobeyed God.' (Bukhari, 'Jihad', 109; 'I'tisam', 2; Muslim, 'Amarah', 32, 33; Nasa'i, 'Bay'ah', 27; etc. - Ed.) We shall see this explained in more detail a little further on in the Qur'an.

(3) In the Islamic order of life Muslims are further required to obey fellow Muslims in authority. This obedience follows, and is subordinate to, obedience to God and the Prophet (peace be on him). Those invested with authority (ulu al-amr) include all those entrusted with directing Muslims in matters of common concern. Hence, persons 'invested with authority' include the intellectual and political leaders of the community, as well as administrative officials, judges of the courts, tribal chiefs and regional representatives. In all these capacities, those 'invested with authority' are entitled to obedience, and it is improper for Muslims to cause dislocation in their collective life by engaging in strife and conflict with them. This obedience is contingent, however, on two conditions: first, that these men should be believers; and second, that they should themselves be obedient to God and the Prophet (peace be on him). These two conditions are not only clearly mentioned in this verse they have also been elucidated at length by the Prophet (peace be on him) and can be found in the Hadith. Let us consider, for example, the following traditions: A Muslim is obliged to heed and to obey an

order whether he likes it or not, as long as he is not ordered to carry out an act of disobedience to God (ma'siyah). When ordered to carry out an act of disobedience-to God he need neither heed nor obey.

There is no obedience in sin; obedience is only in what is good (ma'ruf). (For these traditions see Bukhari, 'Ahkam', 4; 'Jihad', 108; Muslim, 'Amarah', 39; Tirmidhi, 'Jihad', 29; Ibn Majah, 'Jihad', 40; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, pp. 17 and 142 - Ed.)

There will be rulers over you, some of whose actions you will consider good and others abominable. Who even disapproves of their abominable acts will be acquitted of all blame, and whoever resents them he too will remain secure (from all blame); not so one who approves and follows them in their abominable acts. They (i.e. the Companions) asked: 'Should we not fight against them?' The Prophet (peace be on him) said: 'No, not as long as they continue to pray.' (See Bukhari, 'Jihad', 108 - Ed.)

This means that their abandonment of Prayer will be a clear sign of their having forsaken obedience to God and the Prophet (peace be on him). Thereafter it becomes proper to fight against them. In another tradition the Prophet (peace be on him) says:

Your worst leaders are those whom you hate and who hate you; whom you curse and who curse you. We asked: 'O Messenger of God! Should we not rise against them?' The Prophet (peace be on him) said: 'No, not as long as they establish Prayer among you: not as long as they establish Prayer among you.' (See Muslim, 'Amarah', 65, 66; Tirmidhi, 'Fitan', 77; Darimi, 'Riqaq, 78; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 6, pp. 24, 28 - Ed.)

In this tradition the position is further clarified. The earlier tradition could have created the impression that it was not permissible to revolt against rulers as long as they observed their

Prayers privately. But the latter tradition makes it clear that what is really meant by 'praying' is the establishment of the system of congregational Prayers in the collective life of Muslims. This means that it is by no means sufficient that the rulers merely continue observing their Prayers: it is also necessary that the system run by them should at least be concerned with the establishment of Prayer. This concern with Prayer is a definite indication that a government is essentially an Islamic one. But if no concern for establishing Prayer is noticed, it shows that the government has drifted far away from Islam making it permissible to overthrow it. The same principle is also enunciated by the Prophet (peace be on him) in another tradition, in which the narrator says: 'The Prophet (peace be on him) also made us pledge not to rise against our rulers unless we see them involved in open disbelief, so that we have definite evidence against them to lay before God' (Bukhari and Muslim).

(4) In an Islamic order the injunctions of God and the way of the Prophet (peace be on him) constitute the basic law and paramount authority in all matters. Whenever there is any dispute among Muslims or between the rulers and the ruled the matter should be referred to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and all concerned should accept with sincerity whatever judgement results. In fact, willingness to take the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Messenger as the common point of reference, and to treat the judgement of the Qur'an and the Sunnah as the last word on all matters, is a central characteristic which distinguishes an Islamic system from un-Islamic ones. Some people question the principle that we should refer everything to the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be on him). They wonder how we can possibly do so when there are numerous practical questions involved, for example, rules and regulations relating to municipal administration, the management of railways and postal services and so on which are not treated at all in these sources. This doubt arises, however, from a misapprehension about Islam. The basic difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim is that whereas the latter feels free to do as he wishes, the basic characteristic of a Muslim is that he always looks to God and to His Prophet for guidance, and where such guidance is available, a

Muslim is bound by it. On the other hand, it is also quite important to remember that when no specific guidance is available, a Muslim feels free to exercise his discretion because the silence of the Law indicates that God Himself has deliberately granted man the freedom to make his decision.

(90) Since the Qur'an is not merely a legal code, but also seeks to instruct, educate, admonish and exhort, the earlier sentence which enunciates a legal principle is followed by another which explains its underlying purpose and wisdom. Two things are laid down. First, that faithful adherence to the above four principles is a necessary requirement of faith. Anyone who claims to be a Muslim and yet disregards the principles of Islam involves himself in gross self-contradiction. Second, the well-being of Muslims lies in basing their lives on those principles. This alone can keep them on the straight path in this life, and will lead to their salvation in the Next. It is significant that this admonition follows immediately after the section which embodies comments about the moral and religious condition of the Jews. Thus the Muslims were subtly directed to draw a lesson from the depths to which the Jews had sunk, as a result of their deviation from the fundamental principles of true faith just mentioned. Any community that turns its back upon the Book of God and the guidance of His Prophets, that willingly follows rulers and leaders who are heedless of God and His Prophets, and that obeys its religious and political authorities blindly without seeking authority for their actions either in the Book of God or in the practice of the Prophets, will inevitably fall into the same evil and corruption as the Israelites.

اَلَمۡ تَـرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ يَزۡعُمُوۡنَ اَنَّهُمۡ اٰمَنُوۡا بِمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ اِلَيۡكَ وَمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِكَ يُرِيۡدُوۡنَ اَنۡ يَّتَحَاكَمُوۡۤا اِلَى الطَّاغُوۡتِ وَقَدۡ اُمِرُوۡۤا اَنۡ يَّكۡفُرُوۡا بِهٖ ؕ وَيُرِيۡدُ الشَّيۡطٰنُ اَنۡ يُّضِلَّهُمۡ ضَلٰلًا ۢ بَعِيۡدًا ۝۶۰

(4-60) (O Messenger!) Have you not seen those who claim to believe in the Book which has been revealed to you and in the Books revealed before you, and yet desire to submit their disputes to the judgement of taghut (the Satanic authorities who

decide independently of the Law of Allah), whereas they had been asked to reject it. [91] And Satan seeks to make them drift far away from the right way.

(91) Taghut clearly signifies here a sovereign who judges things according to criteria other than the law of God. It also stands for a legal and judicial system which acknowledges neither the sovereignty of God nor the paramount authority of the Book of God. This verse categorically proclaims that to refer disputes to the judgement of a court of law which is essentially taghut contravenes the dictates of a believer's faith. In fact, true faith in God and His Book necessarily requires that a man should refuse to recognize the legitimacy of such courts. According to the Qur'an, belief in God necessitates repudiation of the authority of taghut. To try to submit both to God and to taghut at the same time is hypocrisy.

وَ اِذَا قِيۡلَ لَهُمۡ تَعَالَوۡا اِلٰى مَا اَنۡزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَ اِلَى الرَّسُوۡلِ رَاَيۡتَ الۡمُنٰفِقِيۡنَ يَصُدُّوۡنَ عَنۡكَ صُدُوۡدًا ۝٦١

(4-61) When they are told: 'Come to that which Allah has revealed, and come to the Messenger', you will notice the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion. (92)

(92) This shows that the hypocrites were inclined to refer to the Prophet (peace be on him) those cases in which they expected a favorable decision. When they feared an adverse judgement they refused to refer to the Prophet (peace be on him). This continues to be the practice of many hypocrites even now. Whenever they feel that Islamic Law would further their interests they turn to it but when they feel it would militate against them they refer their disputes to whichever legal systems and courts of law, customs and usages they anticipate most likely to give them a favorable decision.

فَكَيۡفَ اِذَاۤ اَصَابَتۡهُمۡ مُّصِيۡبَةٌ ۢ بِمَا قَدَّمَتۡ اَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ ثُمَّ جَآءُوۡكَ يَحۡلِفُوۡنَ ۖ بِاللّٰهِ اِنۡ اَرَدۡنَاۤ اِلَّاۤ اِحۡسَانًا وَّتَوۡفِيۡقًا ۝٦٢

(4-62) But what happens when some misfortune visits them because of their own misdeeds? Then, they come to you swearing by Allah, (93) saying: 'We wanted nothing but to do good and to bring about conciliation (between the two parties)'.

(93) This may mean that when Muslims become aware of their hypocritical activities and they feel afraid of being caught, censured, and eventually punished, the hypocrites resort to every stratagem, including oaths, in order to assure people that they are true believers.

أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُ اللّٰهُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ ۖ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُل لَّهُمْ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا ﴿٦٣﴾

(4-63) As for them, Allah knows what is in their hearts. Leave them alone, admonish them, and say to them penetrating words about themselves.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذ ظَّلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللّٰهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللّٰهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٦٤﴾

(4-64) (And tell them that) We never sent a Messenger but that he should be obeyed by the leave of Allah. (94) If whenever they wronged themselves they had come to you praying to Allah for forgiveness, and had the Messenger prayed for their forgiveness, they would indeed have found Allah All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

(94) This is to impress upon us that Prophets are not sent so that people may pay lip-service to their Prophethood, and then obey whoever they wish. The purpose of sending Prophets is that people should follow the laws of God as brought and expounded by them rather than laws devised by man, and that they should obey the commands of God as revealed to the Prophets to the exclusion of the commands of others.

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ حَتّٰى يُحَكِّمُوْكَ فِيْمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوْا تَسْلِيْمًا ٦٥

(4-65) But no, by your Lord, they cannot become true believers until they seek your arbitration in all matters on which they disagree among themselves, and then find not the least vexation in their hearts over what you have decided, and accept it in willing submission. (95)

(95) The application of the injunction embodied in this verse is not confined to the life-time of the Prophet (peace be on him). It will remain in force until the Day of Judgement. The guidance the Prophet (peace be on him) proclaimed on God's behalf, and the manner in which he followed God's direction and inspiration, will for ever remain the universal touchstone for Muslims. In fact, recognition of that guidance as the final authority is the criterion of true belief. This principle was pronounced by the Prophet (peace be on him) in the following words: 'None of you can become a believer until his desires become subservient to what I have brought (i.e. my teachings).' (Cited by al-Nawawi in al-Arba'in, see the tradition no. 41, transmitted on their authority of Abu al-Qasim Isma'il b. Muhammad al-Isfahani, Kitab al-Hujjah with the opinion that it is a 'good' and 'sound' tradition, with a sound chain of transmission - Ed.)

وَلَوْ اَنَّا كَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ اَنِ اقْتُلُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ اَوِ اخْرُجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ مَّا فَعَلُوْهُ اِلَّا قَلِيْلٌ مِّنْهُمْ ۭ وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوْا مَا يُوْعَظُوْنَ بِهٖ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَاَشَدَّ تَثْبِيْتًا ٦٦

(4-66) Had We enjoined upon them: 'Slay yourselves', or 'Leave your habitations', very few of them would have done it; (96) yet if they had done as they were admonished, it would have been better for them and would have strengthened them; (97)

(96) As these people are not prepared to endure even minor losses and inconveniences in order to follow the law of God, they can never be expected to make big sacrifices. If asked either to lay down their lives or to give up their homes and families for the sake of the Truth they would fly straight back to unbelief and disobedience.

(97) Had these people been able to free themselves of uncertainty, hesitation and ambivalence, and to resolve firmly to follow and obey the Prophet (peace be on him), their lives would have been spared the instability from which they suffer. Their way of thinking, their morals and their practical dealings would all have found permanent and stable foundations, and they would have enjoyed the blessings granted only to those who follow the one straight path with firmness and resolution. For one who is subject to indecision and hesitation, who keeps changing from one direction to another in a state of uncertainty, life is a continuous exercise in futility.

وَّ اِذًا لَّاٰتَيۡ نٰهُ مِنۡ لَّدُنَّاۤ اَجۡرًا عَظِيۡمًا ۙ﴿۶۷﴾

(4-67) whereupon We would indeed grant them from Us a mighty reward,

وَّلَهَدَيۡ نٰهُمۡ صِرَاطًا مُّسۡتَقِيۡمًا ۙ﴿۶۸﴾

(4-68) and guide them to a straight way.[98]

(98) By giving up uncertainty, and deciding with complete faith and conviction to follow the Prophet (peace be on him), the straight path of their endeavors would have opened up before them. They would have been able to perceive clearly the channels

into which their energies should be directed, so that each step they took would be a step towards the true goal.

وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۚ وَحَسُنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ رَفِيْقًا ۝٦٩

(4-69) And he who obeys Allah and the Messenger - they shall be with those whom Allah has favoured -the Prophets, those steadfast in truthfulness (99), the martyrs, and the righteous." How excellent will they be for companions! (100)

(99) Siddiq denotes someone who is utterly honest, someone whose devotion to truth has reached a very high point. Such a person is always upright and straightforward in his dealings. He supports nothing but right and justice and does so with sincerity. He opposes whatever is contrary to truth, and does not waver in his opposition to falsehood. His life is so unblemished and selfless that even enemies, let alone friends, expect of him unadulterated probity and justice.

The term shahid (pi. shuhada') means 'witness'. It signifies one who attests to the truth of his faith with his whole life. He who lays down his life fighting for God is called a shahid because by this sacrifice he confirms that his confession of faith was backed by a deep, genuine conviction of its truth, and that he valued it above his own life. The term shahid is also applied to those outstandingly honest people who are so trustworthy that their testimony, on any matter, is accepted without hesitation. Salih denotes one whose belief and thinking, motives and intentions, words and deeds, are based on righteousness. In short, he is a person whose life as a whole is oriented to righteousness.

(100) He who enjoys, in this world, the company of the kind of people mentioned in this verse, and whom God judges worthy of the same company in the Hereafter is fortunate. The fact is that unless a man's natural sensitivity has atrophied, the companionship of corrupt and wicked people is a painful punishment even in this transient world, let alone that one should be subjected to the perpetual companionship of such people in the abiding life of the Hereafter. Good people have always longed for the company of like people, both in this world and the Next.

ذٰلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ عَلِيْمًا ۝٧٠

(4-70) That is a bounty from Allah, and Allah suffices to know the truth.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا خُذُوْا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانْفِرُوْا ثُبَاتٍ اَوِ انْفِرُوْا جَمِيْعًا ۝٧١

(4-71) Believers! Always be on your guard against encounters. (101) Then (as circumstance demands) either advance in detachments or advance in a body.

(101) This discourse was revealed after the Battle of Uhud, when the tribes living around Madina had been greatly encouraged by the defeat of the Muslims. Thus dangers seemed to surround the Muslims on all sides. Day in and day out news poured in about the hostile intentions of one tribe after another. Reports came in of attacks mounted now in one area, and then in another. The Muslims were again and again the victims of treachery. Their preachers were invited to preach and then put to the sword. Beyond Madina, neither their lives nor their property was secure. Consequently the Muslims had to prepare themselves for a fierce struggle, for a tremendous, all-out effort to ensure that the Islamic movement would not be crushed.

وَ اِنَّ مِ ۡ كُمۡ لَمَنۡ لَّيُبَطِّئَنَّ فَاِنۡ اَصَابَتۡكُمۡ مُّصِيۡبَةٌ قَالَ قَدۡ اَنۡعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيَّ اِذۡ لَمۡ اَكُنۡ مَّعَهُمۡ شَهِيۡدًا ﴿۷۲﴾

(4-72) Among you there is such who lags behind, (102) then if some affliction strikes you, he says: 'Indeed Allah bestowed His favour upon me that I was not present with them.'

(102) Another meaning could be that such persons not only shirk the risks of fighting themselves but also go about spreading demoralization to discourage others from fighting in the name of God.

وَلَئِنْ اَصٰبَكُمْ فَضْلٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ لَيَقُوْلَنَّ كَاَنْ لَّمْ تَكُنْۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهٗ مَوَدَّةٌ يّٰلَيْتَنِيْ كُنْتُ مَعَهُمْ فَاَفُوْزَ فَوْزًا عَظِيْمًا ۝٧٣

(4-73) And if a bounty from Allah is given you, he says - and says as if there never was any affection between you and him - 'Oh, would that I had been with them, I would have come by a great gain.

فَلْيُقٰتِلْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ الَّذِيْنَ يَشْرُوْنَ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْاٰخِرَةِ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّقٰتِلْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَيُقْتَلْ اَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيْهِ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ۝٧٤

(4-74) Let those who seek the life of the Next World in exchange for the life of this world fight in the way of Allah. (103) We shall grant a mighty reward to whoever fights in the way of Allah, whether he is slain or comes out victorious.

(103) The point stressed here is that fighting in the cause of God cannot be conducted by people engrossed in the pursuit of worldly benefits. This is the task of those who seek to please God, who have complete faith in Him and in the Hereafter, who are prepared to sacrifice all opportunities of worldly success and prosperity, and of all worldly interests, hoping thereby to win God's good pleasure. Irrespective of what happens in the present world such sacrifices will not be wasted in the Hereafter. Jihad (struggle in the cause of God) is not for those who mainly care for worldly benefits.

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقٰتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِيْنَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَآءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ اَهْلُهَا ۚ وَاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا ۙ وَّاجْعَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ لَّدُنْكَ نَصِيْرًا ۝٧٥

(4-75) How is it that you do not fight in the way of Allah and in support of the helpless - men, women and children - who pray: 'Our Lord, bring us out of this land whose people are oppressors and appoint for us from Yourself, a protector, and appoint for us from Yourself a helper'? (104) .

(104) This refers to those wronged, persecuted men, women and children of Makka and of the other tribes in Arabia who had embraced Islam, but were able neither to emigrate nor to protect themselves from the wrongs to which they were subjected. These helpless people suffered many forms of persecution, and prayed for deliverance from oppression.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُقٰتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا يُقٰتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ الطَّاغُوْتِ فَقٰتِلُوْٓا اَوْلِيَآءَ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۚ اِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطٰنِ كَانَ ضَعِيْفًا ۝٧٦

(4-76) Those who have faith fight in the way of Allah, while those who disbelieve fight in the way of taghut (Satan). (105) Fight, then, against the fellows of Satan. Surely Satan's strategy is weak.106

(105) This lays down a clear verdict of God. To fight in the cause of God in order that His religion be established on earth is the task of men of faith, and whoever truly believes can never shirk this duty. To fight in the cause of taghut (authority in defiance of God) in order that the world may be governed by rebels against God is the task of unbelievers in which no believer can engage himself.

(106) Satan and his comrades-in-arms ostensibly undertake tremendous preparations and contrive all kinds of ingenious machinations. True men of faith, however, should not be intimidated either by such preparations or by machinations. For, no matter what they do, they are doomed to fail.

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوْٓا اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ اِذَا فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ اَوْ اَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً ۚ وَقَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ ۚ لَوْلَآ اَخَّرْتَنَآ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ ۗ قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيْلٌ ۚ وَالْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقٰى ۚ وَلَا تُظْلَمُوْنَ فَتِيْلًا ۝٧٧

(4-77) Have you not seen those who were told: 'Restrain you hands, and establish the Prayer, and pay the Zakah'? But when fighting was enjoined upon them some of them feared men as one should fear Allah, or even more, (107) and said: 'Our Lord, why have You ordained fighting for us? Why did You not grant us a little more respite?' Say to them: 'There is little enjoyment in this world. The World to Come is much better for the God-fearing. And you shall not be wronged even to the extent of the husk of a date-stone. (108)

(107) This verse can be interpreted in three ways, and each meaning is equally valid: First, that those who now shirked to fight in the cause of God were themselves initially eager to fight. They often approached the Prophet (peace be on him), saying that they were being wronged, beaten, persecuted and abused, that' their patience was exhausted, and that they wanted permission to fight. They had then been told to be patient and continue to purify their souls by observing Prayers and dispensing Zakah. At that time they had felt disconcerted by this counsel of patience. Later on, some of those very same people were to

tremble at the first sight of the enemy and the dangers of warfare.

Second, that they remained highly 'religious' as long as they were asked merely to pray and pay Zakah, which entailed no risk to their lives. But as soon as that phase was over and they were asked to expose themselves to danger, they began to shiver with fear.

Third, that in the former times the same people had unsheathed their swords for trivial causes. They had fought for loot and plunder, and engaged in feuds motivated by animal impulses, so much so that feuding had almost become their national pastime. At that time they had been told to abstain from bloodshed and to reform themselves by observing Prayers and dispensing Zakah. When, later on, the same people were told that the time had come for them to fight in the cause of God, those who had shown themselves to be lions while fighting for their own selfish causes turned out to be as meek as lambs. The strong hands which had wielded the sword so firmly, and had used it so fiercely for the sake of either personal or tribal honour, or for Satan's sake, became almost paralyzed.

Each of these three meanings applies to a different kind of person, but the actual words of the verse seem to apply equally to all who shirked fighting in the cause of God.

(108) Were they to serve the religion of God and spend their energy in that cause, they would surely be rewarded by Him.

اَ ي نَ مَا تَكُوۡ ا يُدۡرِكۡكُّمُ الۡمَوۡتُ وَلَوۡكُ ۡتُمۡ فِۡ بُرُوۡجٍ مُّشَيَّدَةٍ ؕ وَاِ تُصِبۡهُمۡ حَسَنَةٌ يَّقُوۡلُوۡا ٰذِۡ
مِنۡ عِۡدِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَ اِ تُصِبۡهُمۡ سَيِّئَةٌ يَّقُوۡلُوۡا ٰذِۡ مِنۡ عِۡدِكَ ؕ قُلۡ كُلٌّ مِّنۡ عِۡدِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَمَالِ ٰۤؤُلَآءِ
الۡقَوۡمِ لَا يَكَادُوۡ نَ يَفۡقَهُوۡ نَ حَدِيۡثًا۷۸

(4-78) Wherever you might be, death will overtake you even though you be in massive towers. And when some good happens to them, they say: 'This is from Allah'; whereas when some misfortune befalls them, they say: 'This is because of you'. (109) Say: 'All is from Allah.' What has happened to this people that they seem to understand nothing?

(109) When such people encounter success and victory, they attribute it to the grace of God. They allow themselves to forget that this grace came to them through no one but the Prophet (peace be on him). When they are either beaten or face setbacks because of their own faults and weaknesses they gratuitously exonerate themselves and place the blame squarely on the Prophet (peace be on him).

ط اَصَابَکَ مِنْ حَسَنَۃٍ فَمِنَ اللّٰہِ ۘ وَط اَصَابَکَ مِنْ سَیِّئَۃٍ فَمِنْ نَّفْسِکَ ؕ وَ اَرْسَلْنٰکَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُوْلًا ؕ وَکَفٰی بِاللّٰہِ شَہِیْدًا ۝۷۹

(4-79) Whatever good happens to you is from Allah; and whatever misfortune smites you is because of your own action. We have sent you to mankind (O Muhammad!) as a Messenger, and Allah is sufficient as a witness.

مَنْ یُّطِعِ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدْ اَطَاعَ اللّٰہَ ۚ وَمَنْ تَوَلّٰی فَط اَرْسَلْنٰکَ عَلَیْہِمْ حَفِیْظًا ؕ ۸۰ ۝

(4-80) He who obeys the Messenger thereby obeys Allah; as for he who turns away, We have not sent you as a keeper over them! (110)

(110) Such people are responsible for their own conduct. It is they rather than the Prophet (peace be on him) who will be

censured. The task entrusted to the Prophet (peace be on him) was merely to communicate to them the ordinances and directives of God and he acquitted himself of it very well. It was not his duty to compel them to follow the right way, so that if they failed to follow the teachings communicated to them by the Prophet (peace be on him) the responsibility was entirely theirs. The Prophet (peace be on him) would not be questioned as to why they disobeyed.

وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ طَاعَةٌ فَاِذَا بَرَزُوْا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ بَيَّتَ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ تَقُوْلُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَكْتُبُ مَا يُبَيِّتُوْنَ ۚ فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيْلًا ۝٨١

(4-81) They say (in your presence): 'We obey', but when they leave your presence a party of them meets by night to plan against what you have said. Allah takes note of all their plots. So, let them alone, and put your trust in Allah. Allah is sufficient as a guardian.

اَ فَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُو نَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ؕ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِـدِ غَيرِ اللِ لَوَجَدُوْ ا فِ اخْتِلٰفًا كَثِيرًا ۸۲

(4-82) Do they not ponder about the Qur'an? Had it been from any other than Allah, they would surely have found in it much inconsistency. (111)

(111) The main reason for the attitude of the hypocrites and lukewarm believers was their lack of conviction that the Qur'an came from God. They did not believe that the Prophet (peace be on him) had received the messages and directives that he preached from God Himself. Hence, when they are censured for their hypocritical conduct, they are told that they do not reflect upon the Qur'an. For the Qur'an itself is a strong, persuasive testimony to its divine origin. It is inconceivable that any human being should compose discourses on different subjects under different circumstances and on different occasions, and that the collection of those discourses should then grow into a coherent, homogeneous and integrated work, no component of which is discordant with the others. It is also inconceivable that such a work would be permeated through and through with a uniform outlook and attitude, a work reflecting a remarkable consistency in the mood and spirit of its Author, and a work too mature ever to need revision.

وَ اِذَا جَـآءَ هُمْ اَمْـرٌ مِّنَ ا اَمْنِ اَوِ الْخَـوْفِ اَذَاعُا بِهٖ ؕ وَلَـوْ رَدُّوْ اِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ وَ اِلٰى اُولِى لِاَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِ نَ يَسْتَ نْبِطُوْنَهٗ مِنْهُمْ ؕ وَلَـوْلَا فَضْـلُ اللِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطٰنَ اِلَّا قَلِ يْلًا ۸۳

(4-83) Whenever they come upon any news bearing upon either security or causing consternation they go about spreading it, whereas if they were to convey it to either the Messenger or to those from among them who are entrusted with authority, it would come to the knowledge of those who are competent to investigate it. (112) But for Allah's bounty and mercy

upon you, (weak as you were) all but a few of you would surely have followed Satan.

(112) This was a period of turbulence and upheaval and rumor was rife. Occasionally, baseless and exaggerated reports circulated and seized the whole of Madina and its outlying areas with alarm and consternation. At other times some cunning enemy tried to conceal the dangers threatening the Muslims by spreading soothing reports. A specially keen interest in rumors was taken by those who simply relished anything out of the ordinary, and who did not consider this life-and-death struggle between Islam and Ignorance to be a matter of crucial importance, and who were not aware of the far-reaching consequences of rumor-mongering. As soon as they heard something, they ran about spreading it everywhere. This rebuke is addressed to such people. They are warned against spreading rumors and are directed to convey every report they receive to responsible quarters.

فَقٰتِلْ فِیْ سَبِیْلِ اللّٰهِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ اِلَّا نَفْسَكَ وَحَرِّضِ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ یَّكُفَّ بَاْسَ الَّذِیْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَاللّٰهُ اَشَدُّ بَاْسًا وَّاَشَدُّ تَنْكِیْلًا ۸۴

(4-84) (So, O Messenger!) Fight in the way of Allah -since you are responsible for none except yourself - and rouse the believers to fight, for Allah may well curb the might of the unbelievers. Indeed Allah is strongest in power and most terrible in chastisement.

مَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ نَصِيْبٌ مِّنْهَا ۚ وَمَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ كِفْلٌ مِّنْهَا ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ مُّقِيْتًا ﴿٨٥﴾

(4-85) He who intercedes in a good cause shall share in its good result, and he who intercedes in an evil cause shall share in its burden. (113) Allah watches over everything.

(113) It is all a matter of choice and luck. One has the opportunity to struggle for the cause of God, and to urge others to strive for it in order to raise the banner of the Truth and be rewarded by God for so doing. Likewise, one also has the opportunity to expend one's energy trying to create misunderstanding among God's creatures and to demoralize people in their struggle for His cause thus incurring His chastisement.

وَاِذَا حُيِّيْتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوْا بِاَحْسَنَ مِنْهَآ اَوْ رُدُّوْهَا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ حَسِيْبًا ﴿٨٦﴾

(4-86) When you are greeted with a salutation then return it with a better one, or at least the same. (114) Surely Allah takes good count of everything.

(114) At that time the relations between the Muslims and non-Muslims were strained to the limit. It was feared, therefore, that the Muslims might feel inclined to treat the latter discourteously. They are accordingly asked to pay at least as much respect and consideration to others as is paid to them - and preferably more. Good manners and courtesy are to be matched by the Muslims. In fact, the mission entrusted to the Muslims requires them to excel others in this respect. Harshness, irritability and bitterness are not becoming in a people whose main function is to preach a message and invite people to it; a people committed to guiding mankind towards righteousness. While harshness and bitterness

may at best satisfy one's injured vanity, they are positively harmful to the cause that one seeks to promote.'

اَللّٰہُ لَاۤ اِلٰہَ اِلَّا ہُوَ ؕ لَیَجۡمَعَنَّکُمۡ اِلٰی یَوۡمِ الۡقِیٰمَۃِ لَا رَیۡبَ فِیۡہِ ؕ وَمَنۡ اَصۡدَقُ مِنَ اللّٰہِ حَدِیۡثًا ﴿۸۷﴾

(4-87) There is no god but Allah. He will certainly gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection - the Day regarding which there can be no doubt. Whose word can be truer than Allah's? (115)

(115) Whatever the unbelievers, polytheists and atheists may do does not impair God's godhead. That God is the One and Absolute Lord of all is a fact which none can alter. And a Day will come when He will gather together all human beings and will make them see the consequences of their deeds, and no one will be in a position to escape His retribution. God therefore does not require His good creatures to maltreat, on His behalf, those who are lost in error. This is the link between the present verse and the one preceding it. The same verse also concludes the theme running through the last twenty verses or so (see Verses 71 ff). The present verse outlines that a man can follow whichever course he deems fit, and expend his energy in any direction he likes, but ultimately all men will have to stand before the One True God for His judgement and will see the consequences of their deeds.

فَمَا لَکُمۡ فِی الۡمُنٰفِقِیۡنَ فِئَتَیۡنِ وَّاللّٰہُ اَرۡکَسَہُمۡ بِمَا کَسَبُوۡا ؕ اَتُرِیۡدُوۡنَ اَنۡ تَہۡدُوۡا مَنۡ اَضَلَّ اللّٰہُ ؕ وَمَنۡ یُّضۡلِلِ اللّٰہُ فَلَنۡ تَجِدَ لَہٗ سَبِیۡلًا ﴿۸۸﴾

(4-88) What has happened to you that you have two minds about the hypocrites (116) even though Allah has reverted them, owing to the sins that they earned? (117) Do you

want to lead those to the right way whom Allah let go astray? And he whom Allah lets go astray, for him you can never find a way.

(116) The problem of the hypocrites is discussed here. They had outwardly embraced Islam in Makka and in other parts of Arabia, but instead of migrating to the Domain of Islam they continued co live among their own people who were unbelievers, taking part in all their hostile machinations against Islam and the Muslims. It was not easy for the Muslims to decide how to deal with such people. Some were of the opinion that since they professed Islam, performed Prayers, fasted and recited the Qur'an they could not be treated as unbelievers. Here God pronounces His judgement on this issue.

Unless the following is made clear at this point, the reader is likely to miss the real object of not only this verse but of all those verses in which believers who have failed to migrate are characterized as hypocrites. The fact is that after the Prophet (peace be on him) migrated to Madina the Muslims came to possess a piece of territory where they could fulfil the dictates of their faith. At that time all Muslims who suffered from the pressures and constraints imposed on them by the unbelievers, and who did not enjoy the freedom to practice their religion, were directed to migrate to Madina, the Domain of Islam. It was in these circumstances that all those believers who were in a position to migrate to Madina, but who failed to do so because their hearth and home, kith and kin, and their material interests were dearer to them than Islam, were declared hypocrites. Those who were not really in a position to migrate were reckoned as 'feeble' see (verse 98 below).

It is obvious that Muslims living in non-Islamic territories can be called hypocrites only when the Domain of Islam either extends a general invitation to all of them or at least leaves its doors open to them. In such circumstances, all Muslims who are neither engaged in trying to transform the non-Islamic territory into a Domain of Islam nor inclined to migrate to the latter despite

their ability to do so, will be deemed hypocrites. But if the Domain of Islam neither invites them nor even keeps its doors open for them, then they obviously cannot be declared hypocrites merely because of their failure to migrate. Such persons would be considered hypocrites only if they did something too outrageous to be consistent with true faith.

(117) God has returned them whence they came because of their duplicity, their excessive hankering after their material interests, and their preference for the good of this world over that of the Next. Those people had indeed tried to extricate themselves from the grip of unbelief and to advance towards Islam. To be a true Muslim calls for single-mindedness. It requires a willingness to sacrifice all interests and advantages that are in conflict with the interests of Islam. It requires a faith in the Hereafter strong enough to enable a man to cheerfully sacrifice all worldly advantages for the sake of his eternal happiness. Since those people lacked these qualities they retraced their steps. Could there be any doubt about the stuff they were made of?

وَدُّوْا لَوْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ كَمَا كَفَرُوْا فَتَكُوْنُوْنَ سَوَآءً فَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ حَتّٰى يُهَاجِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَخُذُوْهُمْ وَاقْتُلُوْهُمْ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُّمُوْهُمْ ۪ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوْا مِنْهُمْ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ۙ ﴿٨٩﴾

(4-89) They wish that you should disbelieve just as they disbelieved so that you may all be alike. Do not, therefore, take from them allies until they emigrate in the way of Allah, but if they turn their backs (on emigration), seize them and slay them (118) wherever you come upon them. Take none of them for your ally or helper,

(118) This is the verdict on those hypocritical confessors of faith who belong to a belligerent, non-Muslim nation and actually participate in acts of hostility against the Islamic state.

اِلَّا الَّذِيۡنَ يَصِلُوۡنَ اِلٰى قَوۡمٍ بَيۡنَكُمۡ وَبَيۡنَهُمۡ مِّيۡثَاقٌ اَوۡ جَآءُوۡكُمۡ حَصِرَتۡ صُدُوۡرُهُمۡ اَنۡ يُّقَاتِلُوۡكُمۡ اَوۡ يُقَاتِلُوۡا قَوۡمَهُمۡ ؕ وَلَوۡ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَسَلَّطَهُمۡ عَلَيۡكُمۡ فَلَقٰتَلُوۡكُمۡ ۚ فَاِنِ اعۡتَزَلُوۡكُمۡ فَلَمۡ يُقَاتِلُوۡكُمۡ وَاَلۡقَوۡا اِلَيۡكُمُ السَّلَمَ فَمَا جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ سَبِيۡلًا ۝٩٠

(4-90) unless it be such of them who seek refuge with a people who are joined with you by a covenant, [119] or those who come to you because their hearts shrink from fighting either against you or against their own people. Had Allah so willed, He would certainly have given them power over you and they would have fought against you. If they leave you alone and do not fight against you and offer you peace,, then Allah does not permit you to harm them.

(119) The exception here does not relate to the injunction that they should not be taken as friends and supporters, but to the injunction that the believers should seize and slay them. What is meant is that if a hypocrite takes shelter among an unbelieving people with whom the Muslims have an agreement he should not be pursued into that territory. It is not permissible for Muslims of the Islamic state to kill a hypocrite in some neutral territory even if he merits execution. This is because of the sanctity of the agreement concluded by the Muslims rather than the sanctity of the hypocrite's blood.

سَتَجِدُوۡنَ اٰخَرِيۡنَ يُرِيۡدُوۡنَ اَنۡ يَّاۡمَنُوۡكُمۡ وَيَاۡمَنُوۡا قَوۡمَهُمۡ ؕ كُلَّمَا رُدُّوۡۤا اِلَى الۡفِتۡنَةِ اُرۡكِسُوۡا فِيۡهَا ۚ فَاِنۡ لَّمۡ يَعۡتَزِلُوۡكُمۡ وَيُلۡقُوۡۤا اِلَيۡكُمُ السَّلَمَ وَيَكُفُّوۡۤا اَيۡدِيَهُمۡ فَخُذُوۡهُمۡ وَاقۡتُلُوۡهُمۡ حَيۡثُ ثَقِفۡتُمُوۡهُمۡ ؕ وَاُولٰٓئِكُمۡ جَعَلۡنَا لَكُمۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ سُلۡطٰنًا مُّبِيۡنًا ۝٩١

(4-91) You will also find others who wish to be secure from you, and secure from their people, but who,

whenever they have any opportunity to cause mischief, plunge into it headlong. If such people neither leave you alone nor offer you peace nor restrain their hands from hurting you, then seize them and slay them wherever you come upon them. It is against these that We have granted you a clear sanction.

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ اَنْ يَّقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا اِلَّا خَطَأً ۚ وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَأً فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ وَّدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖٓ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّصَّدَّقُوْا ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَّكُمْ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ۭ وَاِنْ كَانَ مِنْ قَوْمٍۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِّيْثَاقٌ فَدِيَةٌ مُّسَلَّمَةٌ اِلٰٓى اَهْلِهٖ وَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُّؤْمِنَةٍ ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ ۡ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ۝۹۲

(4-92) It is not for a believer to slay another believer unless by mistake. (120) And he who has slain a believer by mistake, his atonement is to set free from bondage a believing person (121) and to pay blood-money to his heirs, (122) unless they forgo it by way of charity. And if the slain belonged to a hostile people, but was a believer, then the atonement is to set free from bondage a believing person.

And if the slain belonged to a (non-Muslim) people with whom you have a covenant, then the atonement is to pay the blood-money to his heirs, and to set free from bondage a believing person. (123) But he who cannot (free a slave) should fast for two consecutive months. (124) This is the penance ordained by Allah. (125) Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

(120) The hypocritical confessors of Islam mentioned here are distinct from those whom the Muslims may kill. The reference here is to Muslims who are either residents of the Domain of Islam (Dar al-Islam) or to those who live in the Domain of War or of Unbelief (Dar al-Harb or Dar al-Kufr) but against whom there is no proof of actual participation in the hostile activities with the enemies of Islam. In the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) there were many people who had embraced Islam and yet, because of genuine difficulties, were living among tribes hostile to

Islam. It occasionally happened that, in attacking a hostile tribe, the Muslims inadvertently killed fellow Muslims living in its midst.

(121) Since the person killed was a believer, expiation of the sin required the emancipation of a Muslim slave.

(122) The Prophet (peace be on him) had fixed the blood-money at either 100 camels, 200 oxen or 2,000 head of cattle. If someone wished to pay this in another form the amount would be determined with reference to the market value of the articles mentioned above. For instance, for those who wished to pay blood-money in cash, the fixed amount in the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) was 800 dinars (8000 dirhams). In the time of Caliph 'Umar the amount of blood-money was fixed at 1000 golden dinars (12000 silver dirhams). It should be noted, however, that this amount relates to an unintentional rather than a deliberate homicide. (Regarding blood-money for unintentional homicide and injury see Abu Da'ud, 'Diyat', 14-17; Tirmidhi, 'Diyat', 1; Nasa'i, 'Qasamah', 34; Ibn Majah, 'Diyat', 6; Malik b. Anas, Muwatta', "Uqul', 4; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 1, pp. 384 and 450; vol. 2, pp. 178, 183, 186, 217, 224; vol. 4, p. 275. See also Ibn Rushd, Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol. 2, pp. 401 ff. - Ed.)

(123) The legal injunctions embodied in this verse are as follows:

(1) If the victim was a resident of the Domain of Islam (Dar al-Islam) the killer is not only required to pay blood-money but also to emancipate a slave by way of expiation.

(2) If the victim was a resident of the Domain of War (Dar al-Harb) the killer is only required to emancipate a slave.

(3) If the victim was a resident of a non-Muslim country which had treaty relations with an Islamic state the killer is required to emancipate a slave and also to pay blood-money. The

amount of the blood-money, however, depends on the terms stipulated in the treaty between the Muslims and the territory of the victim. (See Jassas, Vol. 2, pp. 238 f f. and 240 ff. - Ed.)

(124) This means that he should observe fasting uninterrupted for the entire period. If a man breaks his fast for just one day without a legally valid reason he will be required to resume fasting anew.

(125) This shows that what has been prescribed is an act of repentance and expiation rather than a penalty inflicted on a criminal. Penalization is essentially devoid of the spirit of repentance and of the urge to self-reform. A penalty is suffered under duress, usually with resentment, and leaves behind repugnance and bitterness. On the contrary, what God wants is that the believer who has committed a sin should wash the stain of it from his soul by supererogatory worship, by acts of charity, and by a meticulous fulfilment of all the duties incumbent upon him. Such a person is required to turn to God in remorse and repentance so that his sin may be pardoned and his soul secured against the recurrence of similar errors.

The word kaffarah signifies that which either covers or hides something. To declare that certain acts of charity constitute kaffarah means that those acts overlay the sin and cover it up, just as stains on a wall are covered up when it is painted.

وَمَن يَّقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَآؤُهٗ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيْهَا وَغَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهٗ وَاَعَدَّ لَهٗ عَذَابًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿٩٣﴾

(4-93) And he who slays a believer willfully his reward is Hell, where he will abide. Allah's wrath is against him and He has cast His curse upon him, and has prepared for him a great chastisement.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوْا وَلَا تَقُوْلُوْا لِمَنْ اَلْقٰٓى اِلَيْكُمُ السَّلٰمَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا ۚ تَبْتَغُوْنَ عَرَضَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۡ فَعِنْدَ اللّٰهِ مَغَانِمُ كَثِيْرَةٌ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ۹۴

(4-94) Believers! When you go forth in the way of Allah, discern (between friend and foe), and do not say to him who offers you the greeting of peace: 'You are not a believer.' (126) If you seek the good of this worldly life, there lies with Allah abundant gain. After all, you too were such before, and then Allah was gracious to you. (127) Discern, then, for Allah is well aware of what you do.

(126) In the early days of Islam the greeting as-salam 'alaykum ('peace be on you') was a distinguishing symbol of the Muslims. When a Muslim greeted another Muslim with this expression it signified that he was a member of the same community, that he was a friend and well-wisher, one who wished peace and security, from whom he need entertain no fear of hostility and towards whom, in return, he should not behave with hostility. The Islamic greeting occupied virtually the same position among Muslims as the passwords used by sentries to distinguish friend from foe. This was particularly important in those days because there were no distinctions in dress, language and so on by which Muslims could be conclusively marked off from their non-Muslim Arab compatriots.

The Muslims also encountered a strange problem on the battlefield. Whenever a Muslim was in danger of being harmed inadvertently by other Muslims during the fighting, he resorted to either the Islamic greeting (as-salam 'alaykum) or the Islamic creed There is no god but Allah' (La llaha illallah) in order to indicate that he was their brother-in-faith. The Muslims, however, often suspected this to be merely a ruse of the enemy and therefore sometimes disregarded the utterance of the Islamic greeting or of the Islamic creed, and killed such people and seized their belongings as booty. Although whenever the Prophet (peace be on him) came to know of such incidents, he severely

reproached the people concerned, it, nevertheless, continued to take place. In the end God solved the problem by revelation. The purport of the verse is that no one has the right summarily to judge those who profess to be Muslims, and assume them to be lying for fear of their lives. At least two possibilities exist: the claim may either be true or it may be false. The truth can only be ascertained by proper investigation. While it is impossible to investigate a person's case properly during fighting and this may enable him to save his life by lying, it is equally possible that an innocent, true believer might be put to death by mistake. The error of letting an unbeliever go unpunished is preferable to that of killing a true believer.

(127) The Muslims are now told that there was a time when they were scattered among different tribes of unbelievers. They were, therefore, forced to conceal the fact of being Muslims since they feared that they would be subjected to persecution and hardship. In those days they had nothing else besides their verbal profession to testify to their faith. Later on, some time before these verses were revealed, God benevolently enabled the Muslims to develop a collective entity of their own and thus to raise the banner of Islam in the face of strong opposition from the unbelievers. That the Muslims should fail to appreciate the hardships which other Muslims were enduring, and which they themselves had endured until not long before, and not to treat them with consideration and forbearance, did not seem an adequate way of thanking God for His benevolence.

لَا يَسْتَوِى الْقٰعِدُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ غَيْرُ اُولِى الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجٰهِدُوْنَ فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوٰلِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ ؕ فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ الْمُجٰهِدِيْنَ بِاَمْوٰلِهِمْ وَاَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقٰعِدِيْنَ دَرَجَةً ؕ وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَفَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ الْمُجٰهِدِيْنَ عَلَى الْقٰعِدِيْنَ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ۙ﴿۹۵﴾

(4-95) Those believers who sit at home, unless they do so out of a disabling injury, are not the equals of those who

strive in the way of Allah with their possessions and their lives. Allah has exalted in rank those who strive with their possessions and their lives over those who sit at home; and though to each Allah has promised some good reward, He has preferred those who strive (in the way of Allah) over those who sit at home for a mighty reward. (128)

(128) "Those who sit at home' (i.e. remain passive) does not refer either to those who had been ordered to fight but tried to look for excuses not to fight or to those who were individually obliged to take part in fighting because of the general summons of Jihad (fight in the cause of God) and yet shirked this duty. The reference here is to those who remained engrossed in personal concerns at a time when Jihad had become a collective obligation (fard bi al-kifayah). In the first case the person who fails to fight can only be a hypocrite, and God holds out no good promise for such a person unless there is good reason, for example, genuine disability. In the second case, however, what is required is the mobilization of a part rather than the entire military strength of the Islamic community. In such cases, if the recognized head (imam) of the Islamic community summons the people to come forward and undertake the expedition concerned, those who respond to that call are reckoned to be of superior merit to those who remain occupied with other pursuits however meritorious.

Fard bi al-kifayah signifies a collective duty of the Muslim community so that if some people carry it out no Muslim is considered blameworthy; but if no one carries it out all incur a collective guilt - Ed.

دَرَجٰتٍ مِّنْهُ وَمَغْفِرَةً وَّرَحْمَةً ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿۹۶﴾

(4-96) For them are ranks, forgiveness, and favours from Him. Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ تَوَفّٰٮهُمُ الۡمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ظَالِمِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ قَالُوۡا فِيۡمَ كُنۡتُمۡ‌ؕ قَالُوۡا كُنَّا مُسۡتَضۡعَفِيۡنَ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ‌ؕ قَالُوۡۤا اَلَمۡ تَكُنۡ اَرۡضُ اللّٰهِ وَاسِعَةً فَتُهَاجِرُوۡا فِيۡهَا‌ؕ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَاۡوٰٮهُمۡ جَهَنَّمُ‌ؕ وَسَآءَتۡ مَصِيۡرًا ﴿۹۷﴾

(4-97) While taking the souls of those who were engaged in wronging themselves, (129) the angels asked: 'In what circumstances were you?' They replied: 'We were too weak and helpless in the land.' The angels said: 'Was not the earth of Allah wide enough for you to emigrate in it?' (130) For such men their refuge is Hell - an evil destination indeed;

(129) The reference here is to those who stay behind along with the unbelievers, despite no genuine disability. They are satisfied with a life made up of a blend of Islamic and un-Islamic elements, even though they have had the chance to migrate to the Dar al-Islam and thus enjoy a full Islamic life. This is the wrong that they committed against themselves. What kept them satisfied with the mixture of Islamic and un-Islamic elements in their life was not any genuine disability but their love of ease and comfort, their excessive attachment to their kith and kin and to their properties and worldly interests. These concerns had exceeded reasonable limits and had even taken precedence over their concern for their religion see also(n. 116 above).

(130) Those people who had willingly acquiesced to living under an un-Islamic order would be called to account by God and would be asked: If a certain territory was under the dominance of rebels against God, so that it had become impossible to follow His Law, why did you continue to live there? Why did you not migrate to a land where it was possible to follow the law of God?

اِلَّا الۡمُسۡتَضۡعَفِيۡنَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَآءِ وَالۡوِلۡدَانِ لَا يَسۡتَطِيۡعُوۡنَ حِيۡلَةً وَّلَا يَهۡتَدُوۡنَ سَبِيۡلًا ﴿۹۸﴾

(4-98) except the men, women, and children who were indeed too feeble to be able to seek the means of escape and did not know where to go.

فَاُولٰٓئِکَ عَسَی اللّٰہُ اَنۡ یَّعۡفُوَ عَنۡہُمۡ ؕ وَکَانَ اللّٰہُ عَفُوًّا غَفُوۡرًا ﴿۹۹﴾

(4-99) maybe Allah shall pardon these, for Allah is All-Pardoning, All-Forgiving.

وَمَنۡ یُّہَاجِرۡ فِیۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ یَجِدۡ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ مُرٰغَمًا کَثِیۡرًا وَّسَعَۃً ؕ وَمَنۡ یَّخۡرُجۡ مِنۡۢ بَیۡتِہٖ مُہَاجِرًا اِلَی اللّٰہِ وَرَسُوۡلِہٖ ثُمَّ یُدۡرِکۡہُ الۡمَوۡتُ فَقَدۡ وَقَعَ اَجۡرُہٗ عَلَی اللّٰہِ ؕ وَکَانَ اللّٰہُ غَفُوۡرًا رَّحِیۡمًا ﴿۱۰۰﴾

(4-100) He who emigrates in the way of Allah will find in the earth enough room for refuge and plentiful resources. And he who goes forth from his house as a migrant in the way of Allah and His Messenger, and whom death overtakes, his reward becomes incumbent on Allah. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate. (131)

(131) It should be understood clearly that it is only permissible for a person who believes in the true religion enjoined by God to live under the dominance of an un-Islamic system on one of the following conditions. First, that the believer struggles to put an end to the hegemony of the un-Islamic system and to have it replaced by the Islamic system of life, as the Prophets and their early followers had done. Second, that he lacks the means to get out of his homeland and thus stays there, but does so with utmost disinclination and unhappiness.

If neither of these conditions exist, a believer who continues to live in a land where an un-Islamic order prevails, commits an act of continuous sin. To say that one has no Islamic state to go to does not hold water. For if no Islamic state exists,

are there no mountains or forests from where one could eke out a living by eating leaves and drinking the milk of goats and sheep, and thus avoid living in a state of submission to unbelief.

Some people have misunderstood the tradition which says: 'There is no hijrah after the conquest of Makka' (Bukhari, 'Sayd', 10; 'Jihad', 1, 27, 194; Tirmidhi, 'Siyar', 33; Nasa'i, 'Bay'ah', 15, etc. - Ed.) This tradition is specifically related to the people of Arabia of that time and does not embody a permanent injunction. At the time when the greater part of Arabia constituted the Domain of Unbelief (Dar al-Kufr) or the Domain of War (Dar al-Harb), and Islamic laws were being enforced only in Madina and its outskirts, the Muslims were emphatically directed to join and keep together. But when unbelief lost its strength and elan after the conquest of Makka, and almost the entire peninsula came under the dominance of Islam, the Prophet (peace be on him) declared that migration was no longer needed. This does not mean, however, that the duty to migrate was abolished for Muslims all over the world for all time to come regardless of the circumstances in which they lived.

وَ اِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ تَقْصُرُوْا مِنَ الصَّلٰوةِ ۚ اِنْ خِفْتُمْ اَنْ يَّفْتِنَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ۗ اِنَّ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ كَانُوْا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا مُّبِيْنًا ١٠١

(4-101) When you go forth journeying in the land, there is no blame on you if you shorten the Prayer, (132) (especially) if you fear that the unbelievers might cause you harm. (133) Surely the unbelievers are your open enemies.

(132) Shortening Prayers (qasr) while travelling in peace-time consists of praying two rak'ahs at those appointed times when one is normally required to pray four rak'ahs. The form of qasr during a state of war has not been specified. Prayers should, therefore, be performed as circumstances permit. People should pray in congregation if possible, otherwise individually. If it is not possible to turn towards the qiblah, one may keep the direction in which one happens to be facing. One may even pray while seated either on the back of an animal or on a vehicle. If actual bowing and prostrating are not possible, they may be performed with hand signals. If absolutely necessary, one may even pray while walking. One may also pray even though one's clothes are soiled with blood. If, in spite of these relaxations, a man still fails to manage to perform a Prayer within the prescribed time, he may defer it, following the precedent set by the Prophet (peace be on him) during the Battle of the Ditch.

There is disagreement as to whether one should also perform the sunnah (recommended) Prayers, or confine oneself to the obligatory ones. It is established that the practice of the Prophet (peace be on him) was to keep up the sunnah connected with the fajr (morning) Prayers, and with the witr in the 'isha' (evening) Prayers. At the other prescribed times, he performed only the obligatory Prayers. He did, however, perform the nafl (supererogatory) Prayers whenever he had the chance to do so, sometimes even while he was mounted. For this reason 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar expressed the opinion that one ought not to perform the sunnah Prayers while travelling, except for the sunnah in the fajr

Prayers. But a majority of scholars consider both the performance and the omission of these Prayers as equally permissible, leaving the matter entirely to the discretion of the individual. The opinion held by the Hanafi school, however, is that it is preferable for a traveller actually on the move to omit the sunnah Prayers, but when he makes an overnight stop and is at his ease (even though in the legal sense he may still be a traveller), their performance is preferable.

According to some eminent jurists, journeys on which one may resort to qasr are those characterized as being fi sabil Allah (in the cause of God), such as military expeditions, Pilgrimage, the quest for knowledge, and so on. This is the judgement of 'Abd Allah b. 'Umar, 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud and 'Ata'. On the other hand, Shafi'i and Ahmad b. Hanbal are of the view that such permission extends to all journeys undertaken for lawful purposes, though not to those undertaken for unlawful purposes: indeed, if one travels for illegitimate purposes, one has no right whatever to benefit from the relaxation of qasr. Hanafi jurists, however, do not connect qasr with the purpose of the journey; they consider it lawful on all journeys, regardless of the purposes for which they are undertaken. They hold that a traveller may be either rewarded or punished by God, depending on his purpose in travelling. That, however, has nothing to do with the permissibility of qasr. (See the commentaries on the verse by Qurtubi, Ibn Kathir and Jassas. See also Ibn Rushd, Biddy at al-Mujtahid, vol. 1, p. 163 - Ed.)

Other eminent jurists have inferred from the words: 'And there is no blame on you . . . ' that qasr is not obligatory for a traveller: it is merely permitted. A person may avail himself of it if he chooses, and he may also perform his Prayers normally if he so wishes. This is the view of Shafi'i, even though he considers qasr recommended and holds its omission to be tantamount to failure to adopt the preferable alternative. According to Ahmad b. Hanbal, however, while qasr is not obligatory, its omission falls under the category of disapproved acts. In Abu Hanifah's opinion, qasr is obligatory, and according to one report, Malik is of the same opinion. (See the commentaries on the verse by Qurtubi, Jassas and Ibn

al-'Arabi. See also al-Fiqh 'aid al-Madhdhib al-Arba'ah, vol. 1, p. 471, and n. 1, pp. 471-3 and Ibn Rushd, vol. 1, p. 161 - Ed.) It is established by the Hadith that the Prophet (peace be on him) always shortened his Prayers during his journeys. There is no reliable tradition to the effect that the Prophet (peace be on him) ever prayed four full rak'ahs in these circumstances. Ibn 'Umar states that he accompanied the Prophet (peace be on him) as well as Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman on their journeys, and never saw any of them fail to shorten their Prayers. A number of authentic traditions which have come down from Ibn 'Abbas and several other Companions corroborate this. When 'Uthman prayed four rak'ahs in Mina on the occasion of Hajj, some Companions objected to his not shortening the Prayer. 'Uthman convinced them that he had not made any mistake in so doing by arguing that he had got married in Makka and he had heard from the Prophet (peace be on him) that the place a person married in was in a sense his home. In that respect he was, therefore, not a traveller. (See the commentaries on the verse by Qurtubi, Jassas and Ibn Kathir, and the chapters on 'Salat al-Qasr' in the major collections of Hadith - Ed.)

In opposition to these numerous traditions are two from 'A'ishah which indicate that it is equally valid both to shorten the Prayers and to do them in full. These traditions, however, have weak links in their transmission and are also opposed to the authenticated practice of 'A'ishah herself. It is also true that there are intermediary states between travel and non-travel. During a temporary stop, it is quite proper for a man to shorten his Prayers on some occasions and on others to complete them. It depends upon the circumstances. It is probably in this context that 'A'ishah states that the Prophet (peace be on him) sometimes shortened his Prayers and sometimes performed them in full.

The Qur'anic expression in the verse 'there shall be no blame' also occurs in the Qur'anic verse on the ritual of running between Safa and Marwah see (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 158). The actual words used in both verses apparently mean that these acts were not blameworthy even though the running, as we know, is part of the prescribed rites of Pilgrimage and is obligatory: We can appreciate the significance of both these Qur'anic verses if

we remember that the purpose in each case is to dispel the misunderstanding that the acts concerned might either entail some sin or jeopardize a man's reward.

Another question in. regard to qasr is: What is the minimum travelling distance in which Prayers may be shortened? The Zahiri school recognizes no limit at all: any travelling validates the shortening of Prayers. According to Malik, however, one may not shorten Prayers if the distance involved is either less than forty-eight miles (seventy-seven kilometers) or involves travelling for less than a day and a night. This is also the opinion of Ahmad b. Hanbal and Ibn 'Abbas and a statement in support of it has also come down from Shafi'i. The Companion Anas considers it permissible to shorten Prayers if the travelling distance is fifteen miles. Awza'i, Zuhri and 'Umar consider one day's travelling to be sufficient; Hasan al-Basri says that the journey should be two days long, and Abu Yusuf says that it should be more than two days. According to Abu Hanifah, one may shorten the Prayers on any journey in which one has to travel for three days either on foot or by camel, i.e. a distance of eighteen farsakh. Ibn 'Umar, Ibn Mas'ud and 'Uthman agree with this view. (See the commentary on the verse by Qurtubi and Jassas. See also al-Fiqh 'aid al-Madhahib al-Arba'ah, vol. 1, pp. 472 ff. and Ibn Rushd, vol. 1, pp. 163 ff. - Ed.)

If one stops over en route to one's destination, how long may one stay in one place and still be allowed to shorten one's Prayers? On this question, too, a variety of opinions have been expressed. Ahmad b. Hanbal is of the opinion that if a man decides to stay for four days, he should perform his Prayers in full. Malik and Shafi'i are of the opinion that a man may not shorten his Prayers if he decides to stay at a place for more than four days. Awza'i and Abu Hanifah are respectively of the opinion that if a person intends to stay at a place for more than thirteen or fifteen days, he should pray in full. No categorical injunction has come down from the Prophet (peace be on him) on this matter. All jurists agree, however, that if a man has been held up somewhere and cannot proceed because of some constraint, he may shorten his Prayers indefinitely provided he is in a constant state of readiness to undertake the journey back to his home as soon as

the constraint is removed. Instances are reported of Companions who continued to shorten their Prayers for two years in this kind of circumstance. Treating the situation of a prisoner as analogous to this, Ahmad b. Hanbal holds that he may shorten his Prayers throughout the period of his imprisonment. (For legal discussions on the questions discussed here see the commentaries on the verse by Ibn Kathir, Jassas, Qurtubi and Ibn al-'Arabi. See also Ibn Rushd, vol. 1, pp. 160-5 - Ed.)

(133) The Zahiris and Khawarij have interpreted this to signify that the injunction of shortening Prayers is confined to war-time alone and that it is against the Qur'an to shorten Prayers while travelling in peace-time. But it is established by an authentic tradition that when 'Umar mentioned this misgiving to the Prophet (peace be on him), he said: "This is a charitable gift to you from God, so accept His charitable gift.' (Muslim, 'Salat al-Musafirin', 12; Abu Da'ud, 'Salat al-Safar', 1; Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 3, pp. 129 and 190 - Ed.) It is more or less established by an overwhelmingly large number of traditions that the Prophet (peace be on him) shortened his Prayers in times of both war and peace. Ibn 'Abbas states categorically that the Prophet (peace be on him) left Madina with the intention of performing Pilgrimage to the Ka'bah, and during this journey he prayed two rak'ahs (instead of four) even though he could have nothing to fear except God. (See Nasa'i, 'Taqsir al-Salah', 1 - Ed.) It is for this reason that I have added the word 'especially' in brackets to the text of the translation:

وَ اِذَا كُنتَ فِيهِمْ فَـاَقَمْتَ لَّهُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ فَلْتَقُمْ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُم مَّعَكَ وَلْيَاْ خُـذُوْٓا اَسْلِحَتَهُمْ فَـاِذَا سَجَدُوْا فَلْيَكُوْنُوْا مِن وَّرَآئِكُمْ وَلْتَاْتِ طَآئِفَةٌ اُخْرٰى لَمْ يُصَلُّوْا فَلْيُصَلُّوْا مَعَكَ وَلْيَاْ خُـذُوْا حِذْرَهُمْ وَاَسْلِحَتَهُمْ وَدَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْ تَغْفُلُوْنَ عَنْ اَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَاَمْتِعَتِكُمْ فَيَمِيْلُوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَّيْلَةً وَّاحِدَةً ۭ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِنْ كَانَ بِكُمْ اَذًى مِّنْ مَّطَرٍ اَوْ كُنْتُمْ مَّرْضٰٓى اَنْ تَضَعُوْٓا اَسْلِحَتَكُمْ ۚ وَخُذُوْا حِذْرَكُمْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اَعَدَّ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيْنًا ١٠٢

(4-102) (O Messenger!) If you are among the believers and rise (in the state of war) to lead the Prayer for them, (134) let a party of them stand with you to worship, keeping their arms. (135) When they have performed their prostration, let them go behind you, and let another party who have not prayed, pray with you, remaining on guard and keeping their arms, (136) for the unbelievers love to see you heedless of your arms and your baggage so that they might swoop upon you in a surprise attack. But there shall be no blame upon you if you were to lay aside your arms if you are either troubled by rain or are sick; but remain on guard. Surely Allah has prepared a humiliating chastisement for the unbelievers. (137)

(134) These words have led Abu Yusuf and Hasan b. Ziyad to the view that Prayer in a state of insecurity was confined to the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) alone. There are numerous examples, however, where a Qur'anic injunction was addressed specifically to the Prophet (peace be on him), yet holds good for the succeeding periods. Moreover, it is established that many outstanding Companions also resorted to this form of Prayer, even after the death of the Prophet (peace be on him), and there are no reports of disagreement on this question among the Companions. (For discussion see Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 261-3 and Ibn Rushd, vol. 1, p. 169-Ed.)

(135) This injunction regarding Prayer in a state of either fear or insecurity (salat al-khawf) refers to the time when an enemy attack is anticipated, but the fighting has not yet begun. When fighting is taking place the ruling of the Hanafi school is that Prayer may be deferred. Malik and Thawri are of the opinion that if it is not possible to bow and prostrate in Prayer, it is enough to perform these actions by means of signs. Shafi'i argues that should the need arise, one might even fight while still in the state of Prayer. It is an established fact that on four occasions during the Battle of the Ditch the Prophet (peace be on him) missed

Prayers during the appointed times, but performed them subsequently in their correct sequence, even though the above-mentioned injunction regarding Prayer in the state of insecurity had already been revealed. (See Jassas, vol. 2, pp. 263 ff. - Ed.)

(136) The actual form of congregational Prayer in the state of insecurity depends, to a large extent, on the actual state of the hostilities. The Prophet (peace be on him) prayed variously under different conditions. A Muslim commander may use his discretion and adopt whichever of the following forms of Prayer seems to him most in keeping with the actual circumstances of the conflict:

(1) That a group of soldiers may pray behind the Prayer-leader, while the rest take their positions against the enemy. When one rak'ah is completed, the first group may disperse to be replaced in the Prayer by those who were at battle-stations, and who now complete the second rak'ah behind the leader. In this way the soldiers will have prayed one rak'ah each, and the leader two rak'ahs.

(2) That a group of soldiers may pray first and then another group may pray one rak'ah each behind the leader. Subsequently, each of the two groups comes, in turn, to complete the Prayer by performing one rak'ah individually. In this way, each of the two groups will have prayed one rak'ah congregationally and one rak'ah individually.

(3) That a group may pray two rak'ahs behind the leader, recite tashahhud and finish the Prayer by reciting the salutation. Then the second group may join the Prayer behind the leader and complete it with him. Thus the Prayer-leader will have prayed four rak'ahs and each of the two groups will have prayed two.

(4) That a group may pray one rak'ah behind the leader. When the leader rises to pray the second rak'ah, those who have been following him may complete the second rak'ah by

themselves, including the recitation of the tashahhud and salutation. Then the second group joins the Prayer while the leader is in the second rak'ah. After the leader has finished his second rak'ah and his followers have prayed their first, the latter may rise and complete their Prayer by performing the second rak'ah by themselves. In this case, the leader should prolong his standing in the second rak'ah of the Prayer. The first form has been reported by Ibn 'Abbas, Jabir b. 'Abd Allah and Mujahid. The second form has been reported by 'Abd Allah b. Mas'ud and is the basis of the Hanafi ruling on this matter. The third form of the Prayer has been adopted by Shafi'i and Malik with slight modification. The basis of this ruling is a tradition from Sahl b. Abi Hathmah. There are certain other forms of Prayer in the state of insecurity, details of which can be found in larger works of Islamic Law.

(137) This is to emphasize that the precautions recommended here are among the measures which ought to be adopted with a view to minimizing This tradition reports that the Prophet (peace be on him) led the Prayer of his Companions as prescribed for the state of insecurity. The Companions stood in two rows behind the Prophet (peace be on him). The Companions in the first row completed the first rak'ah with the Prophet (peace be on him), then rose and remained standing until those in the second row had prayed one rak'ah. The latter then rose and stepped forward and the ones standing ahead of them retreated behind them. Then the Prophet (peace be on him) prayed with this group one rak'ah, then sat down until the back raw had prayed one rak'ah. Then the Prophet (peace be on him) recited the salutation (marking the end of the Prayer). See Muslim. 'Salat al-Musafirin' - Ed. losses and ensuring good results. Victory and defeat ultimately depend, however, on the will of God; so even while taking these precautionary measures one should feel sure that God will humiliate those who are trying to extinguish His light.

فَاِذَا قَضَيۡتُمُ الصَّلٰوةَ فَاذۡكُرُوا اللّٰهَ قِيٰمًا وَّقُعُوۡدًا وَّعَلٰى جُنُوۡبِكُمۡ ۚ فَاِذَا اطۡمَاۡنَنۡتُمۡ فَاَقِيۡمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ ۚ اِنَّ الصَّلٰوةَ كَانَتۡ عَلَى الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ كِتٰبًا مَّوۡقُوۡتًا ﴿۱۰۳﴾

(4-103) When you have finished the Prayer, remember Allah -standing, and sitting, and reclining. And when you become secure, perform the regular Prayer. The Prayer is enjoined upon the believers at stated times.

وَلَا تَهِنُوا فِي ابْتِغَاءِ الْقَوْمِ ۖ إِن تَكُونُوا تَأْلَمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُونَ كَمَا تَأْلَمُونَ ۖ وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ
اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ١٠٤

(4-104) Do not be faint of heart in pursuing these people: (138) if you happen to suffer harm they too are suffering just as you are, while you may hope from Allah what they cannot hope for. (139) Allah is All-Knowing, All- Wise.

(138) This refers to those unbelievers who adamantly opposed the cause of Islam and the establishment of the Islamic order.

(139) It is astonishing that men of faith should not be prepared to endure the same degree of hardship for the sake of the Truth as unbelievers do for the sake of falsehood. This is strange insofar as the latter merely seek the transient benefits of worldly life whereas the faithful seek to please, and secure the proximity of the Lord of the Universe and look forward to everlasting rewards.

إِنَّا أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَا تَكُن لِّلْخَائِنِينَ
خَصِيمًا ١٠٥

(4-105) (O Messenger!) We have revealed to you this Book with the Truth so that you may judge between people in accordance with what Allah has shown you. So do not dispute on behalf of the dishonest, (140)

(140) These and certain other verses which occur a little later on (see Verses 113 ff.) deal with an important matter, related to an incident that took place around the time they were revealed. The incident involved a person called Tu'mah or Bashir ibn Ubayriq of the Banu Zafar tribe of the Ansar. This man stole an Ansari's coat of mail. While the investigation was in progress, he put the coat of mail in the house of a Jew. Its owner approached the Prophet (peace be on him) and expressed his suspicion about Tu'mah. But Tu'mah, his kinsmen and many of the Banu Zafar colluded to ascribe the guilt to the Jew. When the Jew concerned was asked about the matter he pleaded that he was not guilty. Tu'mah's supporters, on the other hand, waged a vigorous propaganda campaign to save Tu'mah's skin. They argued that the wicked Jew, who had denied the Truth and disbelieved in God and the Prophet (peace be on him), was absolutely untrustworthy, and his statement ought to be rejected outright. The Prophet (peace be on him) was about to decide the case against the Jew on formal grounds and to censure the plaintiff for slandering Banu Ubayriq, but before he could do so, the whole matter was laid bare by a revelation from God. (For the traditions cited here, see the commentary of Ibn Kathir on this verse - Ed.)

It is obvious that the Prophet (peace be on him) would have committed no sin if he had given judgement on the evidence before him. Judges are quite often faced with such situations. False evidence is given in order to obtain wrong verdicts. The time when this case came up for decision was a time of severe conflict between Islam and unbelief. Had the Prophet (peace be on him) issued a wrong judgement on the basis of the evidence before him, it would have provided the opponents of Islam with an effective weapon against the Prophet (peace be on him) as well as against the entire Islamic community, and even Islam itself. They could have spread the word that the Prophet (peace be on him) and his followers were not concerned about right and justice: it would have been claimed that they were guilty of the same prejudice and chauvinism against which they had themselves been preaching. It was specifically to prevent this situation that God intervened in this particular case.

In this and the following (Verses 105 ff.) the Muslims were strongly censured for supporting criminals for no other reason than either family or tribal solidarity and were told that they should not allow prejudice to interfere with the principle of equal justice for all. Man's instinctive honesty revolts against the idea of supporting one's own kin even when they are wrong, and denying others their legitimate rights.

وَّاسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ۝١٠٦

(4-106) and seek forgiveness from Allah. Surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

وَلَا تُجَادِلْ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْتَانُوْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا اَثِيْمًا ۝١٠٧

(4-107) Do not plead for those who are dishonest to themselves; (141) Allah does not love him who betrays trust and persists in sin.

(141) Whoever commits a breach of trust with others in fact commits a breach of trust with his own self first. For the powers of his head and heart have been placed at his disposal as a trust, and by misusing them he is forcing those powers to support him in acts which involve a breach of trust. In doing so the person concerned suppresses his conscience, which God has placed as a sentinel over his moral conduct, with the result that it is rendered incapable of preventing him from acts of wrong and iniquity. It is only after a man has already carried out this cruel suppression of conscience within himself that he is able to commit acts of sin and iniquity outwardly.

يَّسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُوْنَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ اِذْ يُبَيِّتُوْنَ مَا لَا يَرْضٰى مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ مُحِيْطًا ۝١٠٨

(4-108) They can hide (their deeds) from men but they cannot hide (them) from Allah for He is with them even when they hold nightly counsels that are unpleasing to Allah. Allah encompasses all their doings.

هٰٓاَنْتُمْ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ جٰدَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا فَمَنْ يُّجٰدِلُ اللّٰهَ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اَمْ مَّنْ يَّكُوْنُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

(4-109) You pleaded on their behalf in this worldly life but who will plead with Allah on their behalf on the Day of Resurrection, or who will be their defender there?

وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ سُوْٓءًا اَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهٗ ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللّٰهَ يَجِدِ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرًا رَّحِيْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾

(4-110) He who does either evil or wrongs himself, and then asks for the forgiveness of Allah, will find Allah All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate.

وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ اِثْمًا فَاِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهٗ عَلٰى نَفْسِهٖ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا ﴿١١١﴾

(4-111) He who commits a sin, commits it only to his detriment. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise.

وَمَنْ يَّكْسِبْ خَطِيْٓـَٔةً اَوْ اِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهٖ بَرِيْٓـًٔا فَقَدِ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا وَّ اِثْمًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١١٢﴾

(4-112) But he who commits either a fault or a sin, and then casts it upon an innocent person, lays upon himself the burden of a false charge and a flagrant sin.

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهٗ لَهَمَّتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ يُّضِلُّوْكَ ؕ وَمَا يُضِلُّوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَضُرُّوْنَكَ مِنْ شَىْءٍ ؕ وَاَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُنْ تَعْلَمُ ؕ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيْمًا ﴿١١٣﴾

(4-113) (O Messenger!) But for Allah's favour and mercy upon you, a party of them had resolved to mislead you, yet

they only misled them selves, and could not have harmed you in any way. (142) Allah revealed to you the Book and Wisdom, and He taught you what you knew not. Great indeed has been Allah's favor upon you.

(142) Even if some people succeeded in their design to obtain from the Prophet (peace be on him) a wrong judgement in their favour by presenting a false account of events, the real loss would have been theirs rather than the Prophet's (peace be on him). For the real criminals in the sight of God are the perpetrators of that fraud and not the Prophet (peace be on him) who might in good faith have delivered a verdict that actually did not conform to the facts. Whoever obtains a judgement in his favour by tricking the courts deludes himself into believing that by such tricks he can bring right to his side; right remains with its true claimant regardless of judgements obtained by fraud and deception. (See also Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, Surah 2, n. 197.)

لَا خَيۡرَ فِىۡ كَثِيۡرٍ مِّنۡ نَّجۡوٰىهُمۡ اِلَّا مَنۡ اَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ اَوۡ مَعۡرُوۡفٍ اَوۡ اِصۡلَاحٍۢ بَيۡنَ النَّاسِ ؕ وَمَنۡ
يَّفۡعَلۡ ذٰلِكَ ابۡتِغَآءَ مَرۡضَاتِ اللّٰهِ فَسَوۡفَ نُؤۡتِيۡهِ اَجۡرًا عَظِيۡمًا ﴿۱۱۴﴾

(4-114) Most of their secret conferrings are devoid of good, unless one secretly enjoins in charity, good deeds, and setting the affairs of men right. We shall grant who ever does that seeking to please Allah a great reward.

وَمَنۡ يُّشَاقِقِ الرَّسُوۡلَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الۡهُدٰى وَيَتَّبِعۡ غَيۡرَ سَبِيۡلِ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ نُوَلِّهٖ مَا
تَوَلّٰى وَنُصۡلِهٖ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَسَآءَتۡ مَصِيۡرًا ﴿۱۱۵﴾

(4-115) As for him who sets himself against the Messenger and follows a path other than that of the believers even after true guidance had become clear to him, We will let him go to the way he has turned to, (143) and We will cast him into Hell - an evil destination.

(143) When, after revelation from God, the Prophet (peace be on him) delivered his verdict in favour of the innocent Jew rather than the dishonest Muslim, the latter was so seized by un-Islamic, egotistic and chauvinistic considerations that he left Madina, went straight to Makka to join the ranks of the enemies of Islam and of the Prophet (peace be on him), and undertook open opposition. The verse alludes to that incident.

اِنَّ اللہ لَا یَغۡفِرُ اَنۡ یُّشۡرَکَ بِہٖ وَیَغۡفِرُ مَا دُوۡنَ ذٰلِکَ لِمَنۡ یَّشَآءُ ؕ وَمَنۡ یُّشۡرِکۡ بِاللّٰہِ فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًۢا بَعِیۡدًا ﴿۱۱۶﴾

(4-116) Truly it is only associating others with Allah in His divinity that Allah does not forgive, (144) and forgives anything besides that to whomsoever He wills. Whoever associates others with Allah in His divinity has indeed strayed far away.

(144) In this and the following verses we are asked to consider coolly, the end result of obsession with rage and anger, and what kind of people one chooses to identify with in place of the righteous people from whom one foolishly dissociates oneself.

اِنۡ یَّدۡعُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِہٖۤ اِلَّاۤ اِنٰثًا ۚ وَاِنۡ یَّدۡعُوۡنَ اِلَّا شَیۡطٰنًا مَّرِیۡدًا ﴿۱۱۷﴾

(4-117) Rather than call upon Him, they call upon goddesses, and call upon a rebellious Satan (145)

(145) No one sets up Satan as his 'god' in the sense that he makes him the object of his ritual worship and declares him to be God in so many words. The way to make Satan one's god is to entrust one's reins to him and let oneself be drawn helplessly in whichever direction he wants; the relationship between the two is, then, that of worshipper and worshipped. This shows that either absolute, unreserved obedience to or blind following of anybody is tantamount to 'worshipping' him, so that whoever indulges in this kind of absolute obedience is guilty of worshipping a 'god' other than the One True God.

لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ وَقَالَ لَاَتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيْبًا مَّفْرُوْضًا ﴿١١٨﴾

(4-118) upon whom Allah has laid His curse. He said (to Allah): 'I will take to myself an appointed portion of Your servants (146)

(146) This shows that Satan is determined to lay his claim to a portion of men's time, to their effort and labor, to their energies and capacities, to their material belongings, and to their offspring, and would somehow trick them into devoting a sizeable portion of all these in his cause.

وَّلَاُضِلَّنَّهُمْ وَلَاُمَنِّيَنَّهُمْ وَلَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُبَتِّكُنَّ اٰذَانَ الْاَنْعٰمِ وَلَاٰمُرَنَّهُمْ فَلَيُغَيِّرُنَّ خَلْقَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطٰنَ وَلِيًّا مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١١٩﴾

(4-119) and shall lead them astray, and shall engross them in vain desires, and I shall command them and they will cut off the ears of the cattle, (147) and I shall command them and they will disfigure Allah's creation.' (148) He who took Satan rather than Allah for his guardian has indeed suffered a manifest loss.

(147) The reference here is to a superstitious Arabian custom. It was customary among the Arabs that after a camel had given birth to five or ten young to slit her ears and let her go in the name of their deity; they considered it forbidden to put her to any work. Likewise, the male camel that had caused the birth of ten camels was consecrated to some deity. The slitting of ears symbolized this consecration.

(148) To alter God's creation in some respect does not mean changing its original form. If that was meant, human civilization would have to be considered Satanic in its entirety. For civilization consists essentially of man's putting to use the resources endowed by God. Hence the alteration of God's creation, which is characterized as Satanic, consists in using a thing not for the purpose for which it was created by God. In other words, all acts performed in violation either of one's true nature or of the intrinsic nature of other things are the result of the misleading promptings of Satan. These include, for instance, sodomy, birth control, monasticism, celibacy, sterilization of either men or women, turning males into eunuchs, diverting females from the functions entrusted to them by nature and driving them to perform the functions for which men were created. These and numerous similar measures are enacted by Satan's disciples in this world, which amounts on their part, to saying that the laws of the Creator were faulty and that they would like to 'reform' them.

يَعِدُهُمْ وَيُمَنِّيْهِمْ ؕ وَمَا يَعِدُهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اِلَّا غُرُوْرًا ۝١٢٠

(4-120) Satan makes promises to them and fills them with vain hopes, (149) but whatever he promises them is merely delusion.

(149) Satanic operations are based on making attractive promises and raising high hopes. Whenever Satan wants to mislead men, whether individually or collectively, he tries to inspire them with Utopian expectations. In some he inspires expectations of ecstatic pleasure and outstanding success in their individual lives. He inspires others with prospects for achieving national glory. To still others he promises the well-being of mankind. He makes people feel confident that they can arrive at the ultimate truth without the aid of revealed knowledge. He deludes others into believing that God neither exists nor that there is any Life-after-Death. He comforts others with the belief that even if there is an After-life, they will be able to escape punishment through the intercession of certain persons. In short,

Satan extends to different groups of people different promises and expectations with a view to seducing them.

اُولٰٓئِکَ مَاۡوٰىہُمۡ جَہَنَّمُ ۟ وَلَا یَجِدُوۡنَ عَنۡہَا مَحِیۡصًا ﴿۱۲۱﴾

(4-121) For these people, their abode shall be Hell and from there they shall find no way of escape.

وَالَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ سَنُدۡخِلُہُمۡ جَنّٰتٍ تَجۡرِیۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِہَا الۡاَنۡہٰرُ خٰلِدِیۡنَ فِیۡہَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ وَعۡدَ اللّٰہِ حَقًّا ؕ وَمَنۡ اَصۡدَقُ مِنَ اللّٰہِ قِیۡلًا ﴿۱۲۲﴾

(4-122) But those who believe and do good, We shall cause them to enter the Gardens beneath which rivers flow. Here they will abide for ever. This is Allah's promise in truth and whose word is truer than Allah's?

لَیۡسَ بِاَمَانِیِّکُمۡ وَلَاۤ اَمَانِیِّ اَہۡلِ الۡکِتٰبِ ؕ مَنۡ یَّعۡمَلۡ سُوۡٓءًا یُّجۡزَ بِہٖ ۙ وَلَا یَجِدۡ لَہٗ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰہِ وَلِیًّا وَّلَا نَصِیۡرًا ﴿۱۲۳﴾

(4-123) It is neither your fancies nor the fancies of the People of the Book which matter. Whoever does evil shall reap its consequence and will find none to be his protector and helper against Allah.

وَمَنۡ یَّعۡمَلۡ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنۡ ذَکَرٍ اَوۡ اُنۡثٰی وَہُوَ مُؤۡمِنٌ فَاُولٰٓئِکَ یَدۡخُلُوۡنَ الۡجَنَّۃَ وَلَا یُظۡلَمُوۡنَ نَقِیۡرًا ﴿۱۲۴﴾

(4-124) Whoever does good and believes -whether he is male or female - such shall enter the Garden, and they shall not be wronged in the slightest.

وَمَنۡ اَحۡسَنُ دِیۡنًا مِّمَّنۡ اَسۡلَمَ وَجۡہَہٗ لِلّٰہِ وَہُوَ مُحۡسِنٌ وَّاتَّبَعَ مِلَّۃَ اِبۡرٰہِیۡمَ حَنِیۡفًا ؕ وَاتَّخَذَ اللّٰہُ اِبۡرٰہِیۡمَ خَلِیۡلًا ﴿۱۲۵﴾

(4-125) And whose way of life could be better than that of he who submits his whole being to Allah, does good, and follows exclusively the way of Abraham whom Allah took for a friend?

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِی الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَیْءٍ مُّحِیْطًا ﴿۱۲۶﴾

(4-126) Whatever is in the heavens and in the earth belongs to Allah; (150) Allah encompasses everything. (151)

(150) To submit to God is the best course for man, for it conforms fully to ultimate reality. Since God is the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that lies therein, the only right attitude for man is to give up his unlimited freedom and willingly commit himself to serve and obey God.

(151) If man will neither submit to God nor stop acting in defiance of Him, he should bear in mind that he can never escape from God's grip, for His power encompasses him completely.

وَیَسْتَفْتُوْنَكَ فِی النِّسَآءِ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ یُفْتِیْكُمْ فِیْهِنَّ وَمَا یُتْلٰی عَلَیْكُمْ فِی الْكِتٰبِ فِیْ یَتٰمَی النِّسَآءِ الّٰتِیْ لَا تُؤْتُوْنَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُوْنَ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِیْنَ مِنَ الْوِلْدَانِ وَاَنْ تَقُوْمُوْا لِلْیَتٰمٰی بِالْقِسْطِ ؕ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوْا مِنْ خَیْرٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِهٖ عَلِیْمًا ﴿۱۲۷﴾

(4-127) They ask you to pronounce laws concerning women, (152) say: 'Allah pronounces to you concerning them, (153) and reminds you of the injunctions which were recited to you in the Book about female orphans whom you do not give what has been ordained for them (154) and whom you wish to marry (out of greed)', (155) and the commandments relating to the children who are weak and helpless. (156) Allah directs you to treat the orphans with justice. Allah is well aware of whatever good you do.

(152) The actual query about women is not spelled out directly. The judgement pronounced a little later on in response to that query, however, makes it abundantly clear what the query was.

(153) This is not a response to the query itself. Before attending to this, God once again emphasizes that people should implement His directives regarding orphans in general, and orphan girls in particular, as mentioned at the beginning of this surah see (Verses 2 ff). above). This shows the importance of the rights of orphans in the sight of God. The protection of their rights, as we have pointed out, had already been stressed forcefully (see beginning of the surah, Verses 1-14). But that was not deemed sufficient. Hence, when problems of family life came up for discussion, the question of the well-being of orphans automatically arose even before answering the questions people raised.

(154) This alludes to (verse 3 of this surah): 'And if you fear that you might not treat the orphans justly, then marry the women that seem good to you. '

(155) The words of the text “may be interpreted as”: 'Whom you wish to marry (out of greed)' and also as 'Whom you do not wish to marry.' In explanation of this verse 'A'ishah states that, in those days, guardians of orphan girls who had any significant inheritance from their parents used to perpetrate many wrongs on their wards. If the girl was both rich and good looking, the guardian desired to marry her and exploit both her attractiveness and wealth without either having to make the bridal-due (mahr) or even having to undertake her maintenance. If the girl was ugly, the guardian would neither marry her nor allow her to get married, for she might thus get a husband who would support her

claim to her legitimate rights. (See the commentary of Ibn Kathir on this verse. The tradition is quoted by Ibn Kathir from Bukhari. See also(n. 4)above -Ed.)

(156) The reference here is to the injunctions regarding the protection of the rights of orphans at the beginning of the surah see (Verses 1 ff . and 11) ff. above).

وَ اِنِ امْرَاَۃٌ خَافَتْ مِنْۢ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوْزًا اَوْ اِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَآ اَنْ يُّصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا ؕ وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ ؕ وَاُحْضِرَتِ الْاَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ ؕ وَاِنْ تُحْسِنُوْا وَتَتَّقُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ۱۲۸

♦

(4-128) If (157) a woman fears either ill-treatment or aversion from her husband it is not wrong for the husband and wife to bring about reconciliation among themselves (by compromising on their rights), for settlement is better. (158) Man's soul is always prone to selfishness, (159) but if you do good and are God-fearing, then surely Allah is aware of the things you do. (160)

(157) The actual response to the query begins here. In order to appreciate the response fully one would do well to consider the query itself. In the days of Ignorance a man was free to marry an unlimited number of women, who had virtually no rights. When the preliminary verses of the present surah were revealed (see especially (Verse 3) this freedom was circumscribed in two ways. First, the maximum number of wives was fixed at four. Second, justice (that is, equal treatment of wives) was laid down as a necessary condition for marrying more than one. This gives rise to the question whether a person is obligated by Islam to feel equally towards each of his wives, to love each to an equal degree, and treat them equally even in respect of sexual relationship. Such questions are especially relevant with regard to a husband one of whose wives might be, say, afflicted with either sterility, permanent sickness or who is incapable of sexual

intercourse. Does justice demand that if he fails to live up to the standards of equality mentioned above that he should renounce his first wife in order to marry the second? Moreover, where the first wife is disinclined to agree to annulment of the marriage, is it appropriate for the spouses to make a voluntary accord between themselves, according to which the wife, towards whom the husband feels relatively less attracted, voluntarily surrenders some of her rights, prevailing upon her husband not to repudiate the marriage? Would such an act be against the dictates of justice? It is to questions such as these that these verses are addressed.

(158) It is better for the spouses to come to a mutual understanding so that the wife may remain with the same man with whom she has already spent part of her life.

(159) The 'selfishness' on the part of the wife is that even though she is conscious of the causes which have contributed to her husband's aversion towards her, she nevertheless expects from him the treatment that a husband accords to the wife that he loves. The 'selfishness' of the husband, on the other hand, lies in suppressing her unduly and curtailing her rights to an intolerable extent, merely because she is keen to continue to live with him even though she has lost her attraction for him.

(160) Here, too, God urges the male, as He usually does in such matters, to be magnanimous. God urges a man to treat his wife, who has probably spent a considerable number of years with him as his companion, with kindliness and grace in spite of the aversion that he has come to feel for her. He also urges man to love God, for if He were to deprive him of His loving care and blessing in order to punish him for his shortcomings, what place would he have under the sun?

وَلَن تَسْتَطِيعُوٓا أَن تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَآءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ۚ وَإِن تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿١٢٩﴾

♦🖹📶✉⓿

(4-129) You will not be able to treat your wives with absolute justice not even when you keenly desire to do so. (It suffices in order to follow the Law of Allah that) you incline not wholly to one, leaving the other in suspense. (161) If you act rightly and remain God-fearing, surely Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate. (162)

(161) This means that it is not possible for a man to accord complete equality of treatment to two or more wives under all circumstances and in all respects. It is possible that one is ugly, the other beautiful; one is old, the other young; one is permanently sick, the other healthy; one is irritable, the other good-tempered. These and other differences are likely to make a person less attracted to one and more to the other. In such circumstances, the Law does not demand that one should necessarily maintain absolute equality between the wives in respect of love, emotional attachment and sexual relationship. What it does demand is that if a husband does not repudiate the marriage despite aversion for his wife, either because of his own desire or out of consideration for the desire of his wife, he should at least maintain a good relationship short of which his wife begins to feel as if she is without a husband. In such circumstances, while it is natural that a person should prefer one wife to the other, this should not go to the extent that the woman remains, as it were, in a state of suspension, as if she were without a husband at all.

Some people point out that in this verse the Qur'an in one breath stipulates justice as the necessary condition for plurality of wives and in the other breath declares it to be impossible. On this ground they conclude that the Qur'an has itself revoked the

permission to marry more than one wife. There is, however, absolutely no justification for such an inference. Such an inference would have been justified had the Qur'an merely said that 'You will not be able to treat your wives with (absolute) justice.' But this statement has been followed by the directive: ' ... do not allow yourselves to incline wholly to one, leaving the other in suspense.' This leaves no grounds at all for the blind followers of Christian Europe to force an interpretation of their liking on the verse.

(162) If a man does not deliberately inflict any wrong and tries earnestly to be just in his dealings God will pardon whatever minor shortcomings take place.

وَ اِنۡ يَّتَفَرَّقَا يُغۡنِ اللّٰهُ كُلًّا مِّنۡ سَعَتِهٖ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيۡمًا ﴿۱۳۰﴾

(4-130) But if the two separate, out of His plenty Allah will make each dispense with the other. Indeed Allah is All-Bounteous, All-Wise.

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَلَقَدۡ وَصَّيۡنَا الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡكِتٰبَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِكُمۡ وَ اِيَّاكُمۡ اَنِ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ وَاِنۡ تَكۡفُرُوۡا فَاِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَنِيًّا حَمِيۡدًا ﴿۱۳۱﴾

(4-131) All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth belongs to Allah. We enjoined upon those who were given the Book before you, and also yourselves, to have fear of Allah. But if you disbelieve, then bear in mind that all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth belongs to Allah. Allah is Self-Sufficient, Most Praiseworthy.

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ وَكِيۡلًا ﴿۱۳۲﴾

(4-132) And to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth; and Allah suffices for help and protection.

اِ ن ۚ يَّشَاۡ يُذۡهِبۡكُمۡ اَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَيَاۡتِ بِاٰخَرِيۡنَ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ قَدِيۡرًا ۔ ۱۳۳

(4-133) If He wills, He has the full power to remove you, O mankind, and bring in others in your place.

مَنۡ كَانَ يُرِيۡدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنۡيَا فَعِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنۡيَا وَالۡاٰخِرَةِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيۡعًا بَصِيۡرًا ۔ ۱۳۴ ۞

(4-134) He who desires the reward of this world, let him know that with Allah is the reward of this world and also of the World to Come. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. (163)

(163) In the Qur'an God often rounds off His enunciation of laws by urging people to reform those aspects of family life and social order in which they are generally liable to commit injustice with admonitions designed to create in people the urge to follow those legal injunctions. Since in the preceding verse the believers were asked to treat women and orphans with justice and kindness it was deemed necessary to bring home to them the following points:

First, that people should not entertain the illusion that they have the power to make or mar the destinies of others, that if they were to withdraw their support, people would be left helpless. The fact is that the destinies of all lie in the Hand of God alone and He need not remain dependent upon any single person as the sole instrument for helping any particular creature. The resources of the Lord of the heavens and the earth are limitless and He also knows how to use those resources.

Second, that the followers of the Prophet (peace be on him) ought to heed the admonition that was made to them, just as it was made to the followers of the former Prophets: to fear God in all their actions. They are being told in effect that by following God's guidance they will secure their own well-being rather than be the source of any benefit to God, that they can do God no harm by disobeying Him, just as it did not lie in the power of the followers of the former Prophets to cause God any harm.

The Lord of the Universe does not need people's obedience. If they disobey He may simply replace them with some other nation, and their dismissal will not diminish the majesty and splendor of His realm in the least.

Third, that God alone has the power to dispense the good of this world as well as that of the Hereafter, to lavish transient benefits as well as abiding felicity. It all depends on a man's nature and the extent of his ambition what kind of benefit he seeks from God. If a man is infatuated with the fleeting benefits of this world, and is prepared to sacrifice the benefits of the everlasting life, then God will grant him only the good of this world and he will have no share in the good of the Hereafter. God's benevolence is like a river which never dries up, a river which is both capable of, and geared to, providing abundant water to all who need their tillage watered. It is short-sighted and unambitious to want one's fields to be irrigated only once, and to be prepared thereafter to face the prospect of eternal drought. Anyone with breadth of vision would commit himself to submit to God and obey Him, thereby earning the well-being of both worlds.

The section ends with the assertion that God is All-Seeing and All-Hearing. This means that God is fully aware of the actions of His creatures, and is unlike those negligent sovereigns who are blind in lavishing their favours. God governs the universe with full knowledge and awareness. He has an eye on the capacities and ambitions of all human beings and knows their qualities exactly. He is fully aware of the purposes to which people devote their efforts and energies. Anyone who 'willfully decides to be disobedient to God should therefore not cherish hopes of receiving the favours reserved for those who obey Him.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ وَلَوْ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوِالْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْاَقْرَبِيْنَ ۚ اِنْ يَّكُنْ غَنِيًّا اَوْ فَقِيْرًا فَاللّٰهُ اَوْلٰى بِهِمَا ۣ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوٰٓى اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا ۚ وَاِنْ تَلْوٗٓا اَوْ تُعْرِضُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ١٣٥

(4-135) Believers! Be upholders of justice, (164) and bearers of witness to truth for the sake of Allah, (165) even though it may either be against yourselves or against your parents and kinsmen, or the rich or the poor: for Allah is more concerned with their well-being than you are. Do not, then, follow your own desires lest you keep away from justice. If you twist or turn away from (the truth), know that Allah is well aware of all that you do.

(164) It is not enough for believers to uphold justice themselves: they are expected to be its standard-bearers. They are supposed not merely to practice justice in their own dealings but to strive for its triumph. They have to do all within their power to ensure that injustice is eradicated and replaced by equity and justice. A true believer is required to be the pillar supporting the establishment of right and justice.

(165) The testimony of the believers should be solely for the sake of God. Their testimony should not be biased in favour of any of the parties concerned, they should not use any opportunity for personal aggrandizement, and they should not seek to please anyone but God.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اٰمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوۡلِهٖ وَالۡكِتٰبِ الَّذِىۡ نَزَّلَ عَلٰى رَسُوۡلِهٖ وَالۡكِتٰبِ الَّذِىۡۤ اَنۡزَلَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّكۡفُرۡ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتِهٖ وَكُتُبِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ ضَلٰلًا ۢ بَعِيۡدًا ❶

(4-136) Believers! Believe (166) in Allah and His Messenger and in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger, and in the Book He revealed before. And whoever disbelieves (167) in Allah, in His angels, in His Books, in His Messengers and in the Last Day, has indeed strayed far away.

(166) To ask believers to believe might at first seem strange. The fact is, however, that belief as used here has two meanings.

First, belief denotes that a man has preferred to acknowledge the soundness of true guidance, to distance himself from the fold of those who disbelieve, and to join the camp of the believers. Second, belief denotes faith, a man's believing in the truth with all his heart, with full earnestness and sincerity. It denotes man's sincere determination to mould his way of thinking, his taste and temperament, his likes and dislikes, his conduct and character, his friendship and enmity, and the direction of his efforts and striving, in conformity with the creed which he has resolved to embrace. This verse is addressed to all those who are 'believers' in the first sense of the term, and they are asked to change themselves into true believers, i.e. believers in the second sense.

(167) Kufr has two meanings. One signifies categorical rejection. The other signifies that pretence of belief even when either one's heart is not convinced or one's conduct is flagrantly opposed to the demands of one's belief. Here the term Kufr conveys both meanings, and the verse aims at impressing upon people that whichever kind of Kufr they adopt in respect of the fundamental beliefs of Islam, it will only alienate them from the Truth, and lead them instead to falsehood, and ultimately to their tragic failure and destruction.

اِنَّ الَّذِ ۡ رِ اٰمَنُ ۡ ا ثُمَّ كَفَرُ ۡ ا ثُمَّ اٰمَنُ ۡ ا ثُمَّ كَفَرُ ۡ ا ثُمَّ ا زۡدَادُ ۡ ا كُ ۡ ا ۡ هَرَّ الَّمۡ يَكُنِ اللّٰهُ لِيَـ غۡفِرَ لَهُمۡ وَلَا لِيَهۡ دِيَهُمۡ سَبِيۡلًا ۙ ۝ ♦

(4-137) Allah will neither forgive nor show the right way to those who believed, and then disbelieved, then believed, and again disbelieved, and thenceforth became ever more intense in their disbelief. (168)

(168) This refers to those for whom religion is no more than an object of casual entertainment, a toy with which they like to play as long as it suits their desires and fancies. One wave carries them to the fold of Islam and the next away to that of disbelief. Whenever Islam appears to suit their interests they become

Muslims; and when the glamorous visage of the god of utility leaps up before their eyes they rush off to worship it. To such people God holds out neither the assurance of forgiveness nor of direction to true guidance. The statement that such people 'became even more intense in their disbelief refers to those who are not content with not believing themselves, but also try to undermine the faith of others and to persuade them to disbelief, who engage in secret conspiracies as well as overt activities against Islam, and who devote their energies to the struggle aimed at exalting disbelief and degrading the true religion of God. This is a higher degree of disbelief, involving the progressive heaping of crime upon crime. It is obvious that the punishment for this must be greater than for simple disbelief.

بَشِّرِ ا مُنٰفِقِ ۙ نَ بِاَنَّ لَهُمۡ عَذَابًا اَلِ ۙ ط ❶

(4-138) Give tidings of painful chastisement to the hypocrites.

الَّذِيۡنَ يَتَّخِذُوۡنَ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ اَوۡلِيَآءَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ الۡمُؤۡمِنِيۡنَ ؕ اَيَبۡتَغُوۡنَ عِنۡدَهُمُ الۡعِزَّةَ فَاِنَّ الۡعِزَّةَ لِلّٰهِ جَمِيۡعًا ۱۳۹

(4-139) who take the unbelievers for their allies in preference to the believers. Do they seek honour from them (169) whereas honour altogether belongs to Allah alone?

(169) The term 'jzzah denotes a position which is at once exalted and secure. In other words, the term signifies 'inviolable honour and glory'.

وَقَدۡ نَزَّلَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ فِى الۡكِتٰبِ اَنۡ اِذَا سَمِعۡتُمۡ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يُكۡفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسۡتَهۡزَاُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقۡعُدُوۡا مَعَهُمۡ حَتّٰى يَخُوۡضُوۡا فِىۡ حَدِيۡثٍ غَيۡرِهٖۤ اِنَّكُمۡ اِذًا مِّثۡلُهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ جَامِعُ الۡمُنٰفِقِيۡنَ وَالۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ فِىۡ جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيۡعَا ۙ ۱۴۰

(4-140) Allah has enjoined upon you in the-Book that when you hear the signs of Allah being rejected and scoffed at, you will not sit with them until they engage in some other talk, or else you will become like them. (170) Know well, Allah will gather the hypocrites and the unbelievers in Hell - all together.

(170) A person who professes Islam and yet enjoys the company of those who indulge in blasphemy against God, and who bears with equanimity their scoffing at God and His Messenger, is no different' from the unbelievers mentioned here. (For the injunction in this verse, see also (Surah al-Anam 6: 68) below.

الَّذِيْنَ يَتَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَّعَكُمْ ۖ وَاِنْ كَانَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ نَصِيْبٌ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ نَسْتَحْوِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَنَمْنَعْكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۭ فَاللّٰهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۭ وَلَنْ يَّجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ سَبِيْلًا ١٤١؀

(4-141) These hypocrites watch you closely: if victory is granted to you by Allah, they will say: 'Were we not with you?' And were the unbelievers to gain the upper hand, they will say: 'Did we not have mastery over you, and yet we protected you from the believers?'[171] It is Allah Who will judge between you on the Day of Resurrection, and He will not allow the unbelievers, in any way, to gain advantage over the believers.

(171) This is typical of the hypocrites of every age. Such people try to avail themselves of all the benefits which can accrue from a verbal profession of Islam and identification with the Islamic community. They also try to secure the advantages to be obtained by associating with the unbelievers, by assuring them in every possible way about themselves that they are not 'fanatic Muslims', that their association with the Muslims is only nominal. On the other hand, they never fail to assure the unbelievers that their loyalties and concerns are the same as theirs, that in mental outlook, cultural orientation and taste they are in harmony with them, and that if a decisive conflict between Islam and unbelief were to take place, their weight will certainly be on the side of the latter.

اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ يُخٰدِعُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ ۚ وَاِذَا قَامُوْٓا اِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ قَامُوْا كُسَالٰى ۙ يُرَاۗءُوْنَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ١٤٢؀

(4-142) Behold, the hypocrites seek to deceive Allah, but it is they who are being deluded by Him. When they rise to Prayer, they rise reluctantly, and only to be seen by men. They remember Allah but little. (172)

(172) In the time of the Prophet (peace be on him) no one, unless he prayed regularly, could be reckoned as belonging to the Islamic community. We know that secular associations consider the absence of any member from their meetings, without a valid excuse, a sign of lack of interest, and that in the event of continued absence, they cancel his membership. The early Islamic community did the same with those who absented themselves from congregational Prayers. In those days a person's absence from congregational Prayers was considered a clear indication of his indifference towards Islam: if he absented himself from them repeatedly he was no longer held to be a Muslim. In those days, therefore, even the worst hypocrites had to attend the five daily Prayers in the mosque. What distinguished a true believer from the hypocrite was that the former came to the mosque with devotion, fervor and eagerness, came there well before the appointed time for the Prayer, and did not rush out of the mosque as soon as the Prayer was over. In short, everything about him indicated that his heart was in the Prayer. Whereas the call to the Prayer for the hypocrite seemed like the announcement of an unavoidable calamity. When such a person set off for the mosque, he seemed to do so in spite of himself. He walked as if he were dragging the entire weight of his being. No wonder, then, that as soon as the Prayer was over, he escaped like a prisoner released from jail. His entire demeanor testified that the remembrance of God was not what he really had his heart in.

مُّذَبْذَبِيْنَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ لَآ اِلٰٓى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَلَآ اِلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهٗ سَبِيْلًا ۝١٤٣

(4-143) They dangle between the one and the other (faith and disbelief), and belong neither to these nor to those completely. And he whom Allah lets go astray, for him you can find no way. (173)

(173) Here an important fact has been stated about the person who remained unguided to the Truth despite his acquaintance

with the Book of God and with the life of His Prophet (peace be on him). He was a person who was so disinclined to the Truth and so infatuated with error that even God let him go forth along the same erroneous direction that he had chosen for himself, a person on whom the door of true guidance had been shut and the way towards error had been made smooth by God. It is virtually beyond the power of human-beings to direct such a person to the Truth.

We may be able to grasp this if we consider the case of man's livelihood. God controls all the sources of man's livelihood. Thus, anyone who receives any portion of livelihood receives it from God alone. At the same time, God grants every man livelihood through the means he has himself sought. If a man seeks his livelihood through lawful means and strives accordingly, God opens the door to honest living to him and closes the avenues of dishonest earnings in proportion to his earnestness. On the other hand, there is the person who is bent upon fattening himself on dishonest earnings and strives accordingly. God permits such a person to continue making an unlawful living, and no one has the power to help him secure an honest means of living.

The same applies to man's belief and conduct in this life. In this respect too, the ultimate control rests with God. No human being can proceed along any path, whether it be good or evil, unless God lets him proceed along it, and bestows upon him the means to do so. However, it is up to man himself to choose his own path, and after he has made the choice, God will let him proceed along it, and will even pave the way for him. If a person really cares about God, genuinely seeks the truth and earnestly tries to pursue the path charted by God, God permits him to follow his choice, and even provides the means necessary to proceed along his chosen path. On the other hand, God shuts the door of true guidance on the person who chooses error and strives to proceed only along wrong paths, and further enables him to follow the path of his choice. It is beyond the power of any human being to prevent such a person from thinking wrongly,

acting wrongly and using up his energies in wrong directions. If a man loses the road to his success and is subsequently deprived of true guidance by God, in whose power does it lie, then, to restore to him his lost treasure?

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُوْنِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ اَتُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ تَجْعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١٤٤﴾

(4-144) Believers! Do not take the unbelievers as your allies in preference to the believers. Do you wish to offer Allah a clear proof of guilt against yourselves?

اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ فِى الدَّرْكِ الْاَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ ۚ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيْرًا ﴿١٤٥﴾

(4-145) Surely the hypocrites shall be in the lowest depth of the Fire and you shall find none to come to their help,

اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا وَاَصْلَحُوْا وَاعْتَصَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاَخْلَصُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لِلّٰهِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ؕ وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِ اللّٰهُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ﴿١٤٦﴾

(4-146) except those who re-pent and mend their ways and hold fast to Allah and make their faith exclusive to Allah. (174) Those people shall be numbered with the believers and Allah will certainly bestow on the believers a great reward.

(174) To make one's faith exclusively to God means to concentrate one's loyalties, concerns, affections, and adorations on God, and not to allow any attachments to strike such deep roots in one's heart that one may cease to be capable of sacrificing them for His sake.

مَا يَفْعَلُ اللّٰهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ اِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ وَاٰمَنْتُمْ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيْمًا ﴿١٤٧﴾

(4-147) Why should Allah deal chastisement to you if you are grateful [175] to Him and believe? Allah is All-Appreciative, [176] All-Knowing.

(175) Shukr denotes an acknowledgement of benefaction and a feeling of gratitude. This verse states if a person does not behave ungratefully towards God then there is no reason why God should punish him.

The attitude of gratefulness to God consists of acknowledging His benefaction in one's heart, in confessing it in one's speech and by manifesting it in one's deeds. It is the sum-total of these which is termed shukr. This attitude requires:

(1) that a person should ascribe the benefaction to its real source, letting no one share in either the gratitude or the acknowledgement of benevolence;

(2) that his heart should be overflowing with love for, and loyalty to, the Benefactor, and that he should have no attachment to His opponents;

(3) that he should obey the Benefactor and should not use His bounties contrary to His directives.

(176) The word used here is shakir which we have translated as 'All-Appreciative'. In the context of the God-man relationship, when the word shukr is used in respect of God, it denotes 'appreciation of services'. When it is used in respect of man, it denotes his acknowledgement of God's benefaction and his sense of gratitude to Him. To say that God 'thanks' His creatures stresses that God is fully appreciative of the services which His servants have rendered and will recompense them liberally. This

contrasts sharply with the attitude of human beings, who are generally slow and uncharitable in appreciating the services rendered to them, and quick and severe in censuring people for their omissions. As for God, He is lenient and prone to overlook man's omissions. On the contrary, He rewards man manifold for his good deeds.

لَا يُحِبُّ اللّٰهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوْٓءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ اِلَّا مَنْ ظُلِمَ ۭ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ سَمِيْعًا عَلِيْمًا ١٤٨

(4-148) Allah does not like speaking evil publicly unless one has been wronged. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

اِنْ تُبْدُوْا خَيْرًا اَوْ تُخْفُوْهُ اَوْ تَعْفُوْا عَنْ سُوْۗءٍ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيْرًا ١٤٩

(4-149) (Even though you have the right to speak evil if you are wronged), if you keep doing good -whether openly or secretly -or at least pardon the evil (then that is the attribute of Allah). Allah is All-Pardoning and He has all the power to chastise.

(177)

(177) This verse embodies a moral directive of very high value to the Muslims. The hypocrites, the Jews and the polytheists were all bent on placing all kinds of obstacles in the way of the spread of Islam: They eagerly persecuted the Muslims and used all possible means, however malicious, against them. Such an attitude inevitably created anger and resentment. It was in the context of this storm of bitter feelings that God told the Muslims that He did not consider speaking ill of people as praiseworthy. No doubt the Muslims had been wronged, and if a wronged person speaks out against a wrong-doer, he is quite justified in doing so. Even though this is a person's right, it is more meritorious to continue to do good both in public and in private, and to ignore the misdeeds of others. For one's ideal should be to try to approximate to God's way as far as possible. God with whom one wants to be close is lenient and forbearing; He provides sustenance even to the worst criminals and seeks mitigating

circumstances in even the most serious offences. In order to become close to God, one ought to be generous in spirit and full of tolerance.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ يَكۡفُرُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَيُرِيۡدُوۡنَ اَنۡ يُّفَرِّقُوۡا بَيۡنَ اللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ نُؤۡمِنُ بِبَعۡضٍ وَّنَكۡفُرُ بِبَعۡضٍ ۙ وَّيُرِيۡدُوۡنَ اَنۡ يَّتَّخِذُوۡا بَيۡنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيۡلًا ۝١٥٠

(4-150) There are those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers and seek to differentiate between Allah and His Messengers, and say: 'We believe in some and deny others, and seek to strike a way between the two.

اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ حَقًّا ۚ وَاَعۡتَدۡنَا لِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ عَذَابًا مُّهِيۡنًا ۝١٥١

(4-151) It is they, indeed they, who are, beyond all doubt, unbelievers; (178) and for the unbelievers We have prepared a humiliating chastisement.

(178) Insofar as being an unbeliever is concerned, there is no difference between

(1) those who believe neither in God nor in the Prophets,

(2) those who believe in God but not in the Prophets, and

(3) those who believe in some Prophets but reject others.

وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَلَمۡ يُفَرِّقُوۡا بَيۡنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنۡهُمۡ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَوۡفَ يُؤۡتِيۡهِمۡ اُجُوۡرَهُمۡ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرًا رَّحِيۡمًا ۝١٥٢

(4-152) For those who believe in Allah and His Messengers, and do not differentiate between them, We shall certainly give them their reward. (179) Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (180)

(179) This means that only those who acknowledge God to be their sole object of worship and their only sovereign, and who commit themselves to follow all the Prophets, will merit reward for their acts in the Hereafter. What that reward will be depends on the nature and extent of their acts of goodness. Those who do not either acknowledge the exclusive sovereignty of God or who rebelliously reject some Messengers of God and believe only in those whom they choose to, will not be rewarded, for in God's sight their apparently good acts are essentially not valid.

(180) God will be lenient and forgiving in judging the conduct of those who believe in Him and the Prophets.

يَسْـَٔلُكَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ اَنْ تُنَزِّلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتٰبًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ فَقَدْ سَاَلُوْا مُوْسٰٓى اَكْبَرَ مِنْ ذٰلِكَ
فَقَالُوْٓا اَرِنَا اللّٰهَ جَهْرَةً فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصّٰعِقَةُ بِظُلْمِهِمْ ۚ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَا جَآءَتْهُمُ
الْبَيِّنٰتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَنْ ذٰلِكَ ۚ وَاٰتَيْنَا مُوْسٰى سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١٥٣﴾

(4-153) The People of the Book now ask of you to have a Book come down on them from heaven; (181) indeed they asked of Moses even greater things than this, for they said: 'Make us see Allah with our own eyes' - whereupon the thunderbolt suddenly smote them for their wickedness. (182) Then they took to worshipping the calf after clear signs had come to them. (183) Still, We forgave them, and conferred a manifest commandment upon Moses,

(181) One of the odd demands which the Jews of Madina made to the Prophet (peace be on him) was that if he wanted them to accept his claim to prophethood he should have them either witness a book descending from the heavens or that each one of them should receive a writ from on high, confirming Muhammad's prophethood and the absolute necessity of believing in him.

(182) The purpose here is not to describe the details of any particular event, but merely to mention, in brief, the crimes of the Jews. Hence passing references are made to the main incidents in

the national history of the Jews. The particular event referred to has been mentioned earlier in Surah al-Baqarah. (See Towards Understanding the Quran, Vol. I, Surah 2: 55; also n. 71.)

(183) 'Clear signs' refer here to the signs which people had constantly witnessed from the time of Moses' appointment to his prophetic office, to the drowning of Pharaoh and the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt. It is clear that He Who had secured the deliverance of the Israelites from the clutches of the powerful Egyptian empire was not the calf, but God, the Lord of the Universe. One is simply staggered at the overpowering predisposition of the Jews to error, as evidenced by the fact that at that very juncture in their history when they had experienced the most illustrious signs of God's power and grace they bowed down before the image of the calf, rather than before God, their Benefactor.

وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّوْرَ بِمِيْثَاقِهِمْ وَقُلْنَا لَهُمُ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَّقُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوْا فِى السَّبْتِ وَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِّيْثَاقًا غَلِيْظًا ﴿١٥٤﴾

(4-154) and We raised the Mount high above them and took from them a covenant (184) (to obey the commandment), and ordered them: 'Enter the gate in the state of prostration'. (185) And We said to them: 'Do not violate the law of the Sabbath', and took from them a firm covenant. (186)

(184) This 'manifest commandment' refers to the commandments hichhad been handed over to Moses on tablets. (For a more detailed account of this incident see (Surah al-Araf 7, verses 143 ff.).The covenant referred to here is that which had been entered into by the representatives of Israel in the valley of Mount Sinai. For this see (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 63) and (Surah al-Araf 7:171.)

(185) See Towards Understanding the Qur'an. Vol. I, (Surah 2: 58-9 and n. 75).

(186) See ibid., (Surah 2: 65 and nn. 82-3).

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ وَكُفْرِهِمْ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الْاَنْۢبِيَآءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَّقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوْبُنَا غُلْفٌ ۭ بَلْ طَبَعَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا ۝١٥٥

(4-155) (They have incurred Allah's wrath) for their breaking the covenant, and their rejection of the signs of Allah, and for slaying Prophets without right, and for saying: 'Our hearts are wrapped up in covers' (187) -even though in fact Allah has sealed their hearts because of their unbelief, so that they scarcely believe (188)

(187) This statement of the Jews has already been mentioned in (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 88). In fact, like all ignorant worshippers of falsehood, these people also boasted that their faith in the ideas and prejudices, customs and usages of their forefathers was so firm that they could never be made to forsake them. Whenever the Messengers of God tried to admonish them, they have been told point-blank that no matter what argument or evidence the latter might adduce in support of their message, they would never be prepared to alter their viewpoint. (See Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, Surah 2, n. 94.)

(188) This is a parenthetical statement.

وَّبِكُفْرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلٰي مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَانًا عَظِيْمًا ۝١٥٦

(4-156) and for their going so far in unbelief (189) as uttering against Mary a mighty calumny, (190)

(189) This marks the resumption of the main theme of the discourse.

(190) The Jews had no grounds for suspicion regarding the miraculous birth of Jesus. The day he was born God made the entire Jewish people witness that it was the birth of an extraordinary person, and that his birth had taken place miraculously rather than as the result of an act of moral corruption. When this unmarried girl, of a highly esteemed and pious Israelite family, produced a new-born infant, thousands of people of all age groups thronged to her house out of curiosity. Instead of replying to their queries verbally, Mary pointed to the baby, indicating that he would himself reply. The wonder-struck crowd inquired if they were expected to direct their questions to the infant child who lay in the cradle. To their amazement the child addressed the crowd in a clear and eloquent style: 'I am indeed a servant of God, and to me has He vouchsafed Revelation, me has He made a Prophet'. (Surah Maryam 19: 30.)

Thus God demolished every basis for casting doubt on the birth of Jesus. When Jesus was young no one accused Mary of either unchastity or Jesus of being born illegitimately. When Jesus reached the age of thirty he launched his prophetic mission, censuring the Jews for their misdeeds and reproaching the rabbis and the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. He also called attention to the moral degeneration to which they had sunk, urging people to rise up and engage in the perilous struggle to establish the hegemony of God's religion. Such a struggle called for all kinds of sacrifices and involved confrontation with Satanic forces on all fronts. Once Jesus launched this mission these criminals decided to spare no weapon, however base, in their bid to silence this fearless voice of truth. It was at this point that they flung at Mary the accusation of unchastity and at Jesus that of illegitimate birth. They made these accusations despite full knowledge that both mother and child were absolutely chaste and innocent. That is why this accusation is not characterized as either a wrong or a falsehood. It is rather branded as disbelief (kufr) since the calumny was motivated chiefly by the desire to obstruct the path of true faith and not just to bring an innocent woman into disrepute.

وَّقَوْلِهِمْ اِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيْحَ عِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوْهُ وَلٰكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ؕ وَ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ لَفِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ ؕ مَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ اِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوْهُ يَقِيْنًا ۞ ١٥٧

♦

(4-157) and their saying: 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary', the Messenger of Allah [191] – whereas [192] in fact they had neither slain him nor crucified him but the matter was made dubious to them [193] - and those who differed about it too were in a state of doubt! They have no definite knowledge of it, but merely follow conjecture; [194] and they surely slew him not,

(191) Their criminal boldness had reached such proportions that they attempted to put an end to the life of the one they themselves knew to be a Prophet, and subsequently went around boasting of this achievement. The least reflection on the incident of Jesus talking in his cradle (see the preceding note) makes it clear that there was no strong reason to doubt his prophethood. Moreover, the miracles of Jesus which they themselves witnessed (see Surah Ale-Imran 3 : 49) had firmly established his claim to prophethood. Thus, whatever treatment they meted out to him was not based on any misconception, for they were fully aware that the person whom they were subjecting to criminal treatment had been appointed by God as the bearer of His message. It seems strange that a people should recognize a man to be a Prophet in their hearts and still try to assassinate him. The ways of degenerate nations are indeed strange. Such people are absolutely unprepared to tolerate the existence of those who reproach them for their corruption and seek to prevent them from evil. Hence the reformers, including Prophets, who arise among corrupt nations are always persecuted; they are imprisoned and even put to death. The Talmud mentions that:

Nebuchadnezzar laid waste the land of Israel. . . when the city had been captured, he marched with his princes and officers into the Temple ... on one of the walls he found the mark of an arrow's head, as though somebody had been killed or hit nearby, and he asked: 'Who was killed here?' 'Zachariah, the son of

Yohoyadah, the high priest', answered the people. 'He rebuked us incessantly on account of our transgressions, and we tired of his words, and put him to death.' (The Talmud Selections by H. Polano, London, Frederick Warne & Co.)

The Bible also mentions that when the corrupt practices of Israel exceeded all limits, and Jeremiah warned them that God would have them overrun by other nations in punishment for their wickedness, his warning was greeted by the Jews with the accusation that he was a collaborator with the Chaldeans and hence a traitor. And under that pretext Jeremiah was sent to prison. In the same manner, about two and a half years before Jesus' crucifixion, John the Baptist suffered a cruel fate. On the whole the Jews knew him to be a Prophet, or at least acknowledged him to be one of the most religious people in the nation. But when he criticized the royal court of Herod, the King of Judah, he was first thrown into prison, and then, in response to the demand of a dancing girl, who was Herod's favourite 'mistress', his head was cut off.

If this record of the Jews is kept in mind, it does not seem surprising that, after having subjected Jesus - according to their belief - to crucifixion, they might have been overcome by jubilation and in a fit of self-congratulation might have boastfully exclaimed: 'Yes, we have put a Prophet of God to death!' (For similar incidents see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, Vol. I, Surah 2, n. 79 - Ed.)

(192) This again is a parenthetical statement.

(193) This verse categorically states that Jesus was raised on high before he could be crucified, and that the belief of both the Jews and the Christians that Jesus died on the cross is based on a misconception. As a result of a comparative study of the Qur'anic and Biblical versions we are persuaded that, so far as the trial at the court of Pilate is concerned, it was probably Jesus who was

tried. Pilate sentenced him to death after the Jews showed their deep hostility to Truth and righteousness by openly declaring that, in their view, the life of a thief was of higher value than that of a man with such a pure soul as Jesus. It was then that God raised Jesus up to heaven. The person the Jews subsequently crucified was someone else who, for one reason or another, was mistaken for the person of Jesus. The fact that the person who had actually been crucified was someone other than Jesus does not in any way detract from the guilt of those Jews, for in their minds it was Jesus whose head they were crowning with thorns, in whose face they were spitting, and whom they were subjecting to crucifixion. We are not in a position now to find out how and why such a confusion arose. As no authentic source of information is available to us, it would be inappropriate to conjecture and speculate about the cause of the misapprehension which led the Jews to believe that they had crucified Jesus, the son of Mary, whereas he had already passed far beyond their grasp.

(194) "Those who differed' refers to the Christians. The Christians have dozens of different versions, rather than one universally agreed view, regarding the crucifixion of the Messiah. This in itself is an eloquent testimony that the Christians were doubtful about the actual event. Some of them held the view that the one who was crucified was someone other than-Jesus and that Jesus himself in fact remained standing somewhere nearby, laughing at their folly. Others were of the opinion that the one who was crucified was certainly Jesus himself, but that he did not die on the cross and was still alive when brought down from it. Others asserted that though Jesus died on the cross, he later returned to life, met his disciples and conversed with them about ten times. Again, some believe that the human body of Jesus suffered death and was buried, while the spirit of godhead in him was taken up on high. Yet others believe that after his death the Messiah was resurrected physically and was subsequently taken up to heaven in physical form. Had the truth been fully known and well-established so many divergent views could not have gained currency.

لَ رَّفَعُ الُّ اِلَيۡ ؕ وَكَانَ الِ عَزِيۡزًا حَكِيۡمًا۱۵۸

(4-158) but Allah raised him to Himself. [195] Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

(195) This is the truth revealed by God. What is categorically asserted here is merely that the Jews did not succeed in killing the Messiah, but that God raised him unto Himself. The Qur'an furnishes no detailed information about the actual form of this 'raising'. It neither states categorically that God raised him from the earthly sphere to some place in heaven in both body and soul, nor that his body died on earth and his soul alone was raised to heaven. Hence neither of the two alternatives can be definitely affirmed nor denied on the basis of the Qur'an. If one reflects on the Qur'anic version of the event one gets the impression that, whatever the actual form of this 'raising', the event was of an extraordinary character. This extraordinariness is evident from three things:

First, the Christians believed in the ascension of the Messiah in both body and soul, which was one of the reasons for large sections of people to believe in the godhead of Jesus. The Qur'an does not refute that idea but employs the same term, raf (i.e. 'ascension'), employed by the Christians. It is inconceivable that the Qur'an, which describes itself as the 'Clear Book', would employ an expression that might lend support to a misconception it seeks to repudiate.

Second, one might assume that either the ascension of the Messiah was of the kind that takes place at every person's death or that this 'ascension' meant merely the exaltation of a Prophet's position, like that of Idris: 'And We raised him to an exalted station' (Surah Maryam 19: 57). Had it been so, this idea would have been better expressed by a statement such as: And indeed they did not kill the Messiah; Allah delivered him from execution and caused him to die a natural death. The Jews had wanted to slight him but Allah granted him an exalted position.

Third, if this raf (exaltation, ascension) referred to in the verse: 'Allah raised him to Himself was of an ordinary kind, the statement which follows, namely that 'Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise', would seem altogether out of context. Such a statement is pertinent only in the context of an event which manifested, in a highly extraordinary manner, by the overwhelming power and wisdom of God.

The only Qur'anic argument that can be adduced to controvert this view is the verse in which the expression mutawaffika see (Surah Al 'Imran 3: 55) is employed. But as we have pointed out (see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, (Surah 3, n. 51), this word can denote either God's taking a man unto Himself in soul or taking him unto Himself in both body and soul. Arguments based on the mere use of this word are not enough to repudiate the arguments we have already adduced. Some of those who insist on the physical death of Jesus support their argument by pointing out that there is no other example of the use of the word tawaffa for God's taking unto Himself a man in body as well as in soul. But this argument is not tenable since the ascension of Jesus was a unique event in human history and, therefore, the quest for another example of the use of this term in the same context is meaningless. What is worth exploring is whether or not the use of the word in such a sense is valid according to Arabic usage. If it is, we will have to say that the choice of this particular word lends support to belief in the ascension of Jesus.

If we reflect on this verse in the light of the assumption that Jesus died physically, it appears strange that the Qur'an does not employ those terms which would exclude signifying the simultaneous physical and spiritual ascension of Jesus. On the contrary, the Qur'an prefers a term which, since it is liable to both interpretations (i.e. it can mean both spiritual and physical ascension), lends support to belief in the physical ascension of Jesus, even though that notion was used as a basis to support the false belief in the godhead of Jesus.

Belief in the physical ascension of Jesus is further reinforced by those numerous traditions which mention the return of Jesus, son of Mary, to the world and his struggle against the Anti-Christ before the end of time. (For these traditions see our appendix to Surah 33.) These traditions quite definitively establish the second coming of Jesus. Now it is for anybody to judge which is more reasonable: Jesus' return to this world after his death, or his being alive somewhere in God's universe, and returning to this world at some point in time?

وَ اِنۡ مِّنۡ اَهۡلِ الۡكِتٰبِ اِلَّا لَيُؤۡمِنَنَّ بِهٖ قَبۡلَ مَوۡتِهٖ وَيَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ يَكُوۡنُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ شَهِيۡدًا ۚ ١٥٩

(4-159) There are none among the People of the Book but will believe in him before his death, (196) and he will be a witness against them on the Day of Resurrection. (197)

(196) The death mentioned here could refer either to the death of Jesus or to the death of each and every person among 'the People of the Book'. The text lends itself to both meanings. We have adopted the first in our translation. If we accept the alternative meaning, the verse would mean: "There is no one among the People of the Book who, before his death, will not believe in Jesus.' The expression, 'People of the Book' here refers to the Jews and possibly even to the Christians. In the light of this latter meaning, the purpose of the verse would be to affirm that at the time when the physical death of Jesus takes place, all the living 'People of the Book' would have come to believe in him (i.e. in his prophethood). Alternatively, the verse would mean that the prophethood of Jesus will become manifest to every person among the People of the Book just before he dies so that they will believe in him, but at a time when believing would be of no avail. Both these views have been supported by several Companions, Successors and outstanding scholars of Qur'anic exegesis. The truth of the matter is best known to God alone.

(197) This means that on the Day of Judgement Jesus will stand in the court of the Almighty and testify to the treatment meted out to him and to the message he brought. (For the nature of this testimony see (Surah Al-Miadah 5: 109 ff. below.)

فَبِظُلْمٍ مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ طَيِّبٰتٍ اُحِلَّتْ لَهُمْ وَبِصَدِّهِمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ كَثِيْرًا ۙ
١٦٠

(4-160) Thus, (198) We forbade them many clean things which had earlier been made lawful for them, (199) for the wrong-doing of those who became Jews, for their barring many from the way of Allah, (200)

(198) After this parenthetical statement, the main discourse is once again resumed.

(199) This may refer to the regulation mentioned in (Surah al-Anam 6: 146), that all beasts with claws, and the fat of both oxen and sheep, were prohibited to the Jews. It might also refer, however, to the highly elaborate set of prohibitions found in Judaic Law. To restrict the choice of alternatives in their life is indeed a kind of punishment for a people. (For a fuller discussion see (Surah al-Anam 6, n. 122)below.

(200) The Jews, on the whole, are not satisfied with their own deviation from the path of God. They have become such inherent criminals that their brains and resources seem to be behind almost every movement which arises for the purpose of misleading and corrupting human beings. And whenever there arises a movement to call people to the Truth, the Jews are inclined to oppose it even though they are the bearers of the Scripture and inheritors of the message of the Prophets. Their latest contribution is Communism - an ideology which is the

product of a Jewish brain and which has developed under Jewish leadership. It seems ironical that the professed followers of Moses and other Prophets should be prominent as the founders and promoters of an ideology which, for the first time in human history, is professedly based on a categorical denial of, and an undying hostility to God, and which openly strives to obliterate every form of godliness. The other movement which in modern times is second only to Communism in misleading people is the philosophy of Freud. It is a strange coincidence that Freud too was a Jew.

وَّ اَخْذِهِمُ الرِّبٰوا وَقَدْ نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَ اَكْلِهِمْ اَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبٰطِلِ ؕ وَ اَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۱۶۱

(4-161) and for their taking interest which had been prohibited to them, (201) and for their consuming the wealth of others wrongfully. And for the un believers among them We have prepared a painful chastisement. (202)

(201) The Torah categorically lays down the injunction: 'And if you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be to him as a creditor, and you shall not exact interest from him. If ever you take your neighbor's garment in pledge, you shall restore it to him before the sun goes down; for that is his only covering, it is his mantle for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate' (Exodus 22: 25-7). This is one of several passages of the Torah which embody the prohibition of interest. The followers of the Torah, however, are most conspicuously engaged in transactions involving interest and have become notorious the world over for their meanness and hard-heartedness in monetary matters.

(202) God has kept in store a painful punishment both in this world and in the Next for those Jews who have deviated from the course of true faith and sincere obedience to God, and are steeped in rejection of faith and rebellion against God. The severe

punishment which has befallen the Jews in this world is unique and should serve as a lesson for all. Two thousand years have gone by and they have remained scattered all over the world and have been treated everywhere as outcasts. There has been no period during the last two millennia when they have not been looked on ignominiously and there is no part of the world where they are respected despite their enormous riches. What is more, this nation has been left dangling between life and death, unlike other nations which once appeared on the stage of history and then vanished. Their condemnation to this state of suspension makes them a lesson for all nations till the end of time. It marks the tragic fate that meets a people who, despite enjoying the guidance of the Book of God, dare to defy God. It would seem that their punishment in the Hereafter must be even more severe than in the present world. (For the questions which arise about the validity of our view, in spite of the establishment of the state of Israel, see Towards Understanding the Qur'an, vol. I, Surah 3: 112, n. 90.)

لٰكِنِ الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِى الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَالْمُقِيْمِيْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَالْمُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيْهِمْ اَجْرًا عَظِيْمًا ۝١٦٢

(4-162) Those among them who are firmly rooted in knowledge and the believers, such do believe in what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you. (203) (Those who truly believe) establish the Prayer and pay Zakah, those who firmly believe in Allah and in the Last Day, to them We shall indeed pay a great reward.

(203) Those well acquainted with the true teachings of the Scriptures, and whose minds are free from prejudice, obduracy, blind imitation of their forefathers and bondage to animal desires, will be disposed to follow those teachings. Their attitude is bound to be altogether different from the general attitude of those Jews apparently immersed in unbelief and transgression. Such people realize, even at first glance, that the Qur'anic teaching is essentially the same as that of the previous Prophets, and hence feel no difficulty in affirming it.

اِنَّاۤ اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلَيۡكَ كَمَاۤ اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلٰى نُوۡحٍ وَّالنَّبِيّٖنَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِهٖ ۚ وَاَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلٰۤى اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ وَاِسۡمٰعِيۡلَ وَاِسۡحٰقَ وَيَعۡقُوۡبَ وَالۡاَسۡبَاطِ وَعِيۡسٰى وَاَيُّوۡبَ وَيُوۡنُسَ وَهٰرُوۡنَ وَسُلَيۡمٰنَ ۚ وَاٰتَيۡنَا دَاوٗدَ زَبُوۡرًا ﴿۱۶۳﴾

(4-163) (O Muhammad!) We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the Prophets after him, (204) and We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the offspring of Jacob, and Jesus and Job, and Jonah, and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave to David Psalms. (205)

(204) This emphasizes that Muhammad (peace be on him) did not introduce any innovations, and that his essential message was no different from the earlier revelations. What Muhammad (peace be on him) expounded was the same truth which had previously been expounded by the earlier Prophets in various parts of the world and at different periods of time. Wahy means 'to suggest; to put something into someone's heart; to communicate something in secrecy; to send a message'.

(205) The 'Psalms' embodied in the Bible are not the Psalms of David. The Biblical version contains many 'psalms' by others and they are ascribed to their actual authors. The 'psalms' which the Bible does ascribe to David do indeed contain the characteristic lustre of truth. The book called 'Proverbs', attributed to Solomon, contains a good deal of accretion, and the last two chapters, in particular, are undoubtedly spurious. A great many of these proverbs, however, do have a ring of truth and authenticity. Another book of the Bible is ascribed to Job. Even though it contains many gems of wisdom, it is difficult to believe that the book attributed to Job could in fact be his. For the portrayal of Job's character in that book is quite contrary to the wonderful patience for which he is applauded in the Qur'an and for which he is praised in the beginning of the Book of Job itself. The Book of Job, quite contrary to the Qur'anic portrayal of him, presents him as one who was so full of grievance and annoyance" with God throughout the entire period of his tribulation that his companions had to try hard to persuade him that God was not unjust. In fact Job is shown in the Bible as one whom even his companions failed to convince that God was just.

In addition to these, the Bible contains seventeen other books of the Israelite Prophets. The greater part of these seem to be authentic. In Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Amos and certain other books, in particular, one often encounters whole sections which stir and move one's soul. These sections without doubt have the lustre of Divine revelation. While going through them one is struck by the vehemence of moral admonition, the powerful opposition to polytheism, the forceful exposition of monotheism, and the strong denunciation of the moral corruption of the Israelites which characterize them. One inevitably senses that these books, the orations of Jesus embodied in the Gospels, and the glorious Qur'an are like springs which have arisen from one and the same Divine source.

وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنٰهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَّمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ ؕ وَكَلَّمَ اللّٰهُ مُوْسٰى تَكْلِيْمًا ۝١٦٤

(4-164) We revealed to the Messengers We have already told you of, and to the Messengers We have not told you of; and to Moses Allah spoke directly. (206)

(206) Revelation in the case of other Prophets meant either that they heard a voice or received a message from an angel. The privileged treatment accorded to Moses was that God communicated with him directly. This communication was similar to one that takes place between two persons, as is fully illustrated by the conversation reported in (Surah Ta Ha 20: 11 ff). This unique privilege of Moses is mentioned in the Bible as well, and in much the same manner. It mentions that the Lord used to speak to Moses 'face to face, as a man speaks to his friend' (Exodus 33: 11).

رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ لِئَلَّا يَكُوْنَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللّٰهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَزِيْزًا حَكِيْمًا ۝١٦٥

(4-165) These Messengers were sent as bearers of glad tidings and as warners (207) so that after sending the Messengers people may have no plea against Allah. (208) Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.

(207) It is emphasized that the essential function of all the Prophets was the same: to announce good tidings of salvation and felicity to those who believe in the teachings revealed by God and mend their conduct accordingly, and to warn those who persist in false beliefs and evil ways that they will have to face dire consequences.

(208) God's purpose in sending the Prophets was to establish His plea against mankind. God did not want criminals to have any basis on which to plead that their actions were done in ignorance. Prophets were therefore sent to all parts of the world, and many Scriptures were revealed. These Prophets communicated knowledge of the Truth to large sections of people, and left behind Scriptures which have guided human beings in all ages. If anyone falls a prey to error, in spite of all this, the blame does not lie with God or the Prophets. The blame lies rather with those who have spurned God's message even after having received it, and with those who knew the Truth but failed to enlighten others.

لٰكِنِ اللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اِلَيْكَ اَنْزَلَهٗ بِعِلْمِهٖ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يَشْهَدُوْنَ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰهِ شَهِيْدًا ﴿۱۶۶﴾

(4-166) (Whether people believe or not) Allah bears witness that whatever He has revealed to you, He has revealed with His knowledge, and the angels bear witness to it too, though the witness of Allah is sufficient.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا ضَلٰلًا بَعِيْدًا ﴿۱۶۷﴾

(4-167) Those who denied this truth and barred others from the way of Allah have indeed strayed far.

اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُ وۡا وَظَلَمُوۡا لَمۡ يَكُنِ اللّٰهُ لِيَغۡفِرَ لَهُمۡ وَلَا لِيَهۡدِيَهُمۡ طَرِيۡقًا ۙ ١٦٨

(4-168) Likewise, Allah will neither forgive those who denied the truth and took to wrong-doing nor will He show them any other way.

اِلَّا طَرِيۡقَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَآ اَبَدًا ؕ وَكَانَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرًا ١٦٩

(4-169) save that of Hell wherein they will abide. And that is easy for Allah.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدۡ جَآءَكُمُ الرَّسُوۡلُ بِالۡحَقِّ مِنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ فَاٰمِنُوۡا خَيۡرًا لَّكُمۡ ؕ وَاِنۡ تَكۡفُرُوۡا فَاِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيۡمًا حَكِيۡمًا ۙ ١٧٠

(4-170) O men! Now that the Messenger has come to you bearing the Truth from your Lord, believe in him; it will be good for you. If you reject, know well that to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. (209) Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (210)

(209) By disobeying one cannot hurt the Lord of the heavens and the earth. One can only hurt one's own self.

(210) They are being told that their Lord was not at all unaware of the wickedness in which they indulged, nor did He lack the capacity to deal severely with those who only violated His commands.

يٰٓاَ لَ الْكِتٰبِ لَا تَغْلُوْ ا فِ دِ نِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُوْ لُوْا عَلَى اللّٰ اِلَّا الْحَقَّ ؕ اِنَّمَا الْمَسِيْ خُ عِيْسَى ابْنُ
مَرْيَمَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰ وَكَلِمَتُهٗ ۚ اَلْقٰىهَآ اِلٰى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوْحٌ مِّنْهُ ۫ فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰ وَرُسُلِ ۫ وَلَا تَقُوْ لُوْا ثَلٰثَةٌ ؕ
اِنْتَهُوْ ا خَيْرًا لَّكُمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا اللّٰ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ؕ سُبْحٰنَهٗٓ اَنْ يَّكُوْنَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ ۘ لَهٗ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى
الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَكَفٰى بِاللّٰ وَكِيْلًا ۝١٧١

(4-171) People of the Book! Do not exceed the limits in your religion, (211) and attribute to Allah nothing except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was only a Messenger of Allah, and His command (212) that He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him (which led to Mary's conception). (213) So believe in Allah and in His Messengers, (214) and do not say: (Allah is a) trinity (215). Give up this assertion; it would be better for you. Allah is indeed just one God. Far be it from His glory that He should have a son. (216) To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth. (217) Allah is sufficient for a guardian. (218)

(211) The expression 'People of the Book' refers here to the Christians and the word ghuluw denotes the tendency to exceed the limits of propriety in support of something. The fault of the Jews was that they had exceeded the limits of propriety in rejecting and opposing Jesus, whereas the crime of the Christians was that they had gone beyond the proper limits in their love for and devotion to Jesus.

(212) What is meant by sending the 'command' to Mary is that God ordered Mary's womb to become impregnated without coming into contact with sperm. In the beginning the Christians were told that this was the secret of the fatherless birth of Jesus. Later on, under the misleading influence of Greek philosophy, they equated this with the 'Logos', which was subsequently interpreted as the Divine attribute of speech. The next step in this connection was the development of the notion that this Divine attribute entered into the womb of Mary and assumed the physical form of Jesus. Thus there developed among the Christians the false doctrine of the godhead of Jesus, and the false

notion that out of His attributes God caused that of speech to appear in the form of Jesus.

(213) Here Jesus himself is called 'a spirit from God'. The same idea is also expressed elsewhere in the Qur'an: 'And We supported him with the spirit of holiness' (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 87).The import of both verses is that God endowed Jesus with a pure, impeccable soul. He was therefore an embodiment of truth, veracity, righteousness, and excellence. This is what the Christians had been told about Christ. But they exceeded the proper limits of veneration for Jesus. The 'spirit from God' became the 'spirit of God', and the 'spirit of holiness' was interpreted to mean God's own Spirit which became incarnate in Jesus. Thus, along with God and Jesus, there developed the third person of God - the Holy Ghost. It was this unjustified exaggeration which led the Christians to even greater error. Ironically, however, Matthew contains the statement that: 'But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.' (The Bible, Authorized version, p. 771.)

(214) The followers of Christ are urged to acknowledge God as the only God and to believe in the prophethood of all the Prophets, and that Jesus was one of them. This was the teaching of Christ and a basic truth which his followers ought to recognize.

(215) They are urged to abandon the trinitarian doctrine, regardless of the form in which it was found. The fact is that the Christians subscribe simultaneously to the unity and the trinity of God. The statements of Jesus on this question in the Gospels, however, are so categorical that no Christian can easily justify anything but the clear, straightforward doctrine that God is One and that there is no god but He. The Christians, therefore, find it

impossible to deny that monotheism is the very core of true religion. But the original confusion that in Jesus the Word of God became flesh, that the Spirit of God was incarnate in him, led them to believe in the godhead of Jesus and of the Holy Ghost along with that of God. This gratuitous commitment gave rise to an insoluble riddle: how to combine monotheism with the notion of trinity. For over eighteen centuries Christian theologians have grappled with this self-created riddle. The concept of the trinity is capable of such a myriad of interpretations that literally dozens of sects have arisen as a result of its ambiguity. And it has been largely responsible for the various Christian churches indulging in mutual excommunication. Moreover, it is logically impossible to maintain belief in trinity without impairing belief in One God. This problem has arisen because of the extravagance in which the Christians have indulged. The easiest course to get out of the morass is to give up the innovated belief in the godhead of Jesus and of the Holy Ghost, acknowledge God as the Only God, and accept Jesus as His Messenger rather than as God's partner in godhead.

(216) This is the refutation of the fourth extravagance in which the Christians have indulged. Even if the reports embodied in the New Testament are considered authentic, the most that can be inferred from them (particularly those embodied in the first three Gospels) is that Jesus likened the relationship between God and His servants to that between a father and his children, and that he used to employ the term 'father' as a metaphor for God. But in this respect Jesus was not unique. From very ancient times the Israelites had employed the term 'father' for God. The Old Testament is full of examples of this usage. Jesus obviously employed this expression in conformity with the literary usage of his people. Moreover, he characterized God not merely as his own father but as the father of all men. Nevertheless, the Christians exceeded all reasonable limits when they declared Jesus to be the only begotten son of God. Their strange doctrine on this question is that since Jesus is an incarnation, an embodiment of the Word and Spirit of God, he is therefore the only son of God, who was sent to the earth in order to expiate the sins of humanity through

his crucifixion. The Christians hold this to be their basic doctrine even though they cannot produce one shred of evidence from the statements of Jesus himself. This doctrine was a later product of their fancies, an outcome of the extravagance in which they indulged as a result of their impression of the awe-inspiring personality of their Prophet.

God does not repudiate here the doctrine of expiation, for this is not an independent doctrine but a corollary of recognizing Jesus as the son of God, and is a mystical and philosophical answer to the query as to why the only begotten son of God died an accursed death on the cross. The doctrine of expiation automatically falls apart by repudiating the dogma that Jesus was the son of God and by dispelling the misapprehension that he was crucified.

(217) This strongly emphasizes that the true relationship between God and His creatures is one between the Lord and His slave. This repudiates the idea that the relationship which exists is one between a father and his offspring.

(218) God is Himself sufficiently powerful to govern His dominion and has no need of a son to assist Him.

لَ يَّسْتَ كِفَ الْمَسِ حُ لَ يَّكُونَ عَبْدًا لِّلِ وَلَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَ ُ الْمُقَرَّبُو نَ ۚ وَمَ يَّسْتَكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِ ۚ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ اِلَيْ جَمِيعًا ۝١٧٢

(4-172) The Messiah neither did disdain to be a servant of Allah nor do the angels who are stationed near to Him; and whoever disdains to serve Him, and waxes arrogant, Allah will certainly muster them all to Him.

فَاَمَّا الَّذِي نَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَيُوَفِّيْهِمْ اُجُوْرَهُمْ وَيَزِيْدُهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ ۚ وَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَنْكَفُوْا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا ۙ وَّلَا يَجِدُوْنَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيًّا وَّلَا نَصِيْرًا ۝١٧٣

(4-173) He will grant those who have believed and done good deeds their rewards in full, and will give them more out of His bounty. He will bestow upon those who have been disdainful and arrogant a painful chastisement; and they will find for themselves neither a guardian nor a helper besides Allah.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ نُوْرًا مُّبِيْنًا ۝١٧٤

(4-174) O men! A proof has come to you from your Lord, and We have sent down unto you a clear light.

فَاَمَّا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوْا بِهٖ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِيْ رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ ۙ وَّيَهْدِيْهِمْ اِلَيْهِ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيْمًا ۝١٧٥

(4-175) Allah will surely admit those who believe in Him and hold fast to Him to His mercy and bounty, and will guide them on to a straight way to Himself.

يَسْتَفْتُوْنَكَ ۭ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُفْتِيْكُمْ فِي الْكَلٰلَةِ ۭ اِنِ امْرُؤٌا هَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّلَهٗٓ اُخْتٌ فَلَهَا نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ ۚ وَهُوَ يَرِثُهَآ اِنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ لَّهَا وَلَدٌ ۭ فَاِنْ كَانَتَا اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُمَا الثُّلُثٰنِ مِمَّا تَرَكَ ۭ وَاِنْ كَانُوْٓا اِخْوَةً رِّجَالًا وَّنِسَاۗءً فَلِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْاُنْثَيَيْنِ ۭ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اَنْ تَضِلُّوْا ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ۝۱۷۶

(4-176) People [219] ask you to pronounce a ruling concerning inheritance from those who have left behind no lineal heirs (kalalah). [220] Say: 'Allah pronounces for you the ruling: should a man die childless but have a sister, [221] she shall have one half of what he has left behind; and should the sister die childless, his brother shall inherit her. [222] And if the heirs are two sisters, they shall have two-thirds of what he has left behind. [223] And if the heirs are sisters and brothers, then the male shall have the share of two females. Allah makes (His commandments) clear to you lest you go astray. Allah has full knowledge of everything.

(219) This verse was revealed long after the revelation of the rest of this surah. According to certain traditions, this verse was the very last Qur'anic verse to be revealed. (For these traditions, see Ibn Kathir's comments on this verse - Ed.) Even if this is disputed, it shows at least that this verse was revealed in 9 A.H., whereas the Muslims had been reciting the present surah, al-Nisa, for quite some time before that. It was for this reason that this verse was not included among the verses relating to inheritance mentioned at the beginning of the surah, but was attached to it at the end as an appendix.

(220) There is disagreement about the meaning of the word kalalah. According to some scholars, it means one who dies leaving neither issue nor father nor grandfather. According to others, it refers to those who die without issue (regardless of whether succeeded by either father or grand father). On this question 'Umar remained undecided up to the last. But the majority of jurists accept the opinion of Abu Bakr that the former meaning is correct. The Qur'an also seems to support this, for here the sister of the kalalah has been apportioned half of the inheritance whereas, had his father been alive, the sister would

not have inherited from him at all. (For relevant traditions on the subject see the commentary on this verse by Ibn Kathir. For legal discussion on the question see the commentaries of Jassas and Qurtubi - Ed.)

(221) The apportioned shares in inheritance mentioned here are those of brothers and sisters, whether related through both parents or through a common father only. Abu Bakr gave this interpretation in one of his pronouncements and none of the Companions expressed any dissent. This view is, therefore, considered to be supported by consensus (ijma').

(222) This means that if there is no other legal heir the brother will receive the entire inheritance. In the presence of other heirs (such as husband), the brother will receive all the residual inheritance after the other heirs have received their apportioned shares.

(223) The same also applies to more than two sisters.